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SCRUTINY

A Quarterly Review

Edited by

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L. C. KNIGHTS W. H. MELLERS

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LITERATURE AND SOCIETY[1]

TWO or three years back, or at any time in the Marxising decade, having been invited to discourse on 'Literature and Society', I should have known what was expected of me—and what to expect. I should have been expected to discuss, or to give opportunities for discussing, the duty of the writer to identify himself with the working-class, the duty of the critic to evaluate works of literature in terms of the degree in which they seemed calculated to further (or otherwise) the proper and pre-destined outcome of the class-struggle, and the duty of the literary historian to explain literary history as the reflection of changing economic and material realities (the third adjective, 'social', which I almost added here would be otiose). I should have been braced for such challenges as the proposition that D. H. Lawrence, though he

> 'was unquestionably aware of and tried to describe the outside forces that were undermining the bourgeois society into which he made his way . . . saw those forces from a *bourgeois* viewpoint, as destroyers to be combated. Consequently he misrepresented reality'.[2]

What was wrong with his work was that he 'shared the life of a social class which has passed its prime'.

I assume that the expectation I should have had to address myself to in those not so very remote days isn't entertained at all generally on the present occasion, and I assume it gladly. But that does leave me with a large undirected formula on my hands: 'Literature and Society' might, in fact, seem to be daunting and embarrassing in the wealth of possibilities it covers. However, certain major interests of my own respond to it quite comfortably and I had no difficulty in concluding that I should be expected to do what, in accordance with those interests, it would suit me to do: that is, to try and define on what grounds and in what ways the study of literature—literature as it concerns me, who am avowedly in the first place a literary critic—should, I think, be seen as intimately relevant to what may be presumed to be the major interests of students at the London School of Economics.

For if the Marxist approach to literature seems to me unprofitable, that is not because I think of literature as a matter of isolated works of art, belonging to a realm of pure literary values (whatever *they* might be); works regarding the production of which it is enough to say that individuals of specific creative gifts were

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[1]This is the substance, reconstructed in a condensed form from the notes used on the occasion, of an address given to the Students' Union of the London School of Economics and Politics.

[2]*The Mind in Chains* (edited by C. Day Lewis, reviewed in *Scrutiny* for September, 1937).

born and created them. No one interested in literature who began to read and think immediately after the last war—at a time, that is, co-incident with the early critical work of T. S. Eliot—can fail to have taken stock, for conscious rejection, of the Romantic critical tradition (if it can be called that): the set of ideas and attitudes about literary creation coming down through the nineteenth century. That tradition laid all the stress on inspiration and the individual genius. How do masterpieces arrive? Gifted individuals occur, inspiration sets in, creation results. Mr. Eliot, all of whose early prose may be said to have been directed against the Romantic tradition, which till then had not been effectively challenged, lays the stress on the other things (or some of them) besides individual talent and originative impulse from within that have to be taken acount of when we try to understand any significant achievement in art. Of course, it was no discovery that there are these things to be taken account of: criticism and literary history had for generations dealt in influences, environments and the extra-literary conditions of literary production. But we are apt to be peculiarly under the influence of ideas and attitudes of which we are not fully conscious, they prevail until rejected, and the Romantic set—an atmosphere of the unformulated and vague—may be said to have prevailed until Mr. Eliot's criticism, co-operating with his poetry, made unconsciousness impossible and rejection inevitable.

Something like the idea of Tradition so incisively and provocatively formulated by him plays, I think, an essential part in the thinking of everyone to-day who is seriously interested in literature. If I say that idea represents a new emphasis on the social nature of artistic achievement, I ought to add at once that the word 'social' probably doesn't occur in the classical essay, *Tradition and the Individual Talent* (the word that takes Mr. Eliot's stress is 'impersonal'). The 'society' implied in this 'social'—and (which is, of course, my point) in the idea of Tradition—is not the Marxist concept; and the difference is what I have my eye on. But let me first remind you of the idea as Mr. Eliot formulates it. The individual writer is to be aware that his work is *of* the Literature to which it belongs and not merely added externally to it. A literature, that is, must be thought of as essentially something more than an accumulation of separate works: it has an organic form, or constitutes an organic order, in relation to which the individual writer has his significance and his being. 'Mind' is the analogy (if this is the right word) used:

> 'He must be aware that the mind of Europe—the mind of his own country—a mind which he learns in time to be much more important than his own private mind—is a mind which changes . . .'

and so on.

Something, I said, in the nature of this way of thinking seems to me inevitable for anyone who thinks about literature at all. The ways in which it is at odds with Marxist theories of culture are

obvious. It stresses, not economic and material determinants, but intellectual and spiritual, so implying a different conception from the Marxist of the relation between the present of society and the past, and a different conception of society. It assumes that, enormously—no one will deny it—as material conditions count, there is a certain measure of spiritual autonomy in human affairs, and that human intelligence, choice and will do really and effectively operate, expressing an inherent human nature. There *is* a human nature—that is how, from the present point of view, we may take the stress as falling; a human nature an understanding of which is of primary importance to students of society and politics. And here is the first way that presents itself of indicating the kind of importance literature—the literary critic's literature—should be recognized to have for such students: the study of it is, or should be, an intimate study of the complexities, potentialities and essential conditions of human nature.

But that, by itself, is too large a proposition to take us anywhere. Let me, by way of moving towards more discussible particularity, make another obvious note on the difference between the Marxist kind of attitude toward literature and that represented by the idea of Tradition I've invoked. It's true that this latter stresses the social aspect of creative achievement as the Romantic attitude didn't; but it allows for the individual aspect more than the Marxist does. This is inevitably a crude way of putting it—as you'll see, that 'inevitably' is my point. But to postpone that for a moment: you can't be interested in literature and forget that the creative individual is indispensable. Without the individual talent there is no creation. While you are in intimate touch with literature no amount of dialectic, or of materialistic interpretation, will obscure for long the truth that human life lives only in individuals: I might have said, the truth that it is only in individuals that society lives.

The point I wanted to make is this: you can't contemplate the nature of literature without acquiring some inhibition in respect of that antithesis, 'the individual and society', and losing any innocent freedom you may have enjoyed in handling it; without, that is, acquiring some inhibiting apprehensions of the subtleties that lie behind the antithesis.

An illustration presents itself readily. I have spoken of the 'Romantic' attitude, and the phrase might be called misleading, since the actual poets of the Romantic period—Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Keats—differ widely among themselves. No general description worth offering will cover them. Though as influences they merge later in a Romantic tradition, they themselves do not exemplify any common Romanticism. What they have in common is that they belong to the same age; and in belonging to the same age they have in common something negative: the absence of anything to replace the very positive tradition (literary, and more than literary—hence its strength) that had prevailed till towards the end of the eighteenth century. It is this tradition, the Augustan, that I want to consider briefly first.

It originated in the great changes in civilization that make the second part of the seventeenth century look so unlike the first, and its early phase may be studied in the works of John Dryden. The conventions, standards and idiom of its confident maturity offer themselves for contemplation in *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*. The relevant point to be made about it for the present purpose is that it laid a heavy stress on the social. Its insistence that man is a social being was such as to mean in effect that all his activities, inner as well as outer, that literature took cognizance of were to belong to an overtly social context. Even the finest expressions of the spirit were to be in resonance with a code of Good Form—for with such a code the essential modes and idioms of Augustan culture were intimately associated. The characteristic movements and dictions of the eighteenth century, in verse as well as prose, convey a suggestion of social deportment and company manners.

An age in which such a tradition gets itself established is clearly an age in which the writer feels himself very much at one with society. And the Augustan hey-day, the Queen Anne period, was a period very confident of its flourishing cultural health. But we should expect such an insistence on the social to have in time a discouraging effect on the deeper sources of originality, the creative springs in the individually experiencing mind. We should expect to find evidence of this in the field of poetry, and we find it. This is no place to pretend to give a fair account of the Augustan decline, which was a complex affair: I'm merely stressing an aspect that is relevant to my present purpose. Where, then, a tradition like that I have adumbrated prevails there is bound before long to be a movement of protest in minds of the kind that ought to be creative. They will feel that conventional expression—that which, nevertheless, seems natural and inevitable to the age—imposes a conventional experience, and that this, suppressing, obtruding, muffling, and misrepresenting, is at odds with their own. There will be a malaise, a sense of blunted vitality, that would express itself to this effect if it were fully conscious. Full consciousness is genius, and manifests itself in technical achievement, the new use of words. In the seventeen-eighties it is William Blake.

Blake in his successful work says implicitly: 'It is I who see and feel. I see only what *I* see and feel only what *I* feel. My experience is mine, and in its specific quality lies its significance'. He may be said to have reversed for himself the shift of stress that occurred at the Restoration. But to such a reversal there is clearly a limit. Blake uses the English language, and not one of his own invention; and to say that he uses it is not to say that it is for him a mere instrument. His individuality has developed in terms of the language, with the ways of experiencing, as well as of handling experience, that it involves. The mind and sensibility that he has to express are *of* the language.

I may seem here to be handling a truism of the kind that there's no point in recalling. But I believe that the familiar truths that we contemplate when we contemplate the nature of language—

in the way, that is, in which we have to when we take a critical interest in literature—have the familiarity of the familiar things that we tend to lose sight of when we begin to think. And what I have just been touching on is perhaps the most radical of the ways in which the literary critic's interest in literature leads to a new recognition of the essentially social nature of the individual—and (I may add) of the 'reality' he takes for granted.

In any case, I want to pass at once to an order of consideration that will probably seem to have more discussible bearings on the normal pre-occupations of the student of society. The measure of social collaboration and support represented by the English language didn't make Blake prosperously self-sufficient; he needed something more—something that he didn't get. This is apparent in a peculiar kind of difficulty that his work offers to the critic. I am thinking of the difficulty one so often has in deciding what kind of thing it is one has before one.

> A petty sneaking knave I knew—
> O! Mr. Cromek, how do ye do?

—that is clearly a private blow-off. *The Tyger* is clearly a poem (in spite of the abandoned job of the third stanza[3]). But again and again one comes on the thing that seems to be neither wholly private nor wholly a poem. It seems not to know what it is or where it belongs, and one suspects that Blake didn't know. What he did know—and know deep down in himself—was that he had no public: he very early gave up publishing in any serious sense. One obvious consequence, or aspect, of this knowledge is the carelessness that is so apparent in the later prophetic books. Blake had ceased to be capable of taking enough trouble. The uncertainty I have just referred to is a more radical and significant form of the same kind of disability. In the absence, we may put it, of adequate social collaboration (the sense, or confident prospect, of a responsive community of minds was the minimum he needed) his powers of attaining in achieved creation to that peculiar impersonal realm to which the work of art belongs and in which minds can meet—it is as little a world of purely private experience as it is the public world of the laboratory—failed to develop as, his native endowment being what it was, they ought to have done.[4]

The inevitable way in which serious literary interest develops towards the sociological is suggested well enough here. What better conditions, one asks, can one imagine for a Blake? Can one imagine him in a tradition that should have nurtured his genius rather than have been something it had to escape from, and in a society that should have provided him with the best conceivable public? But what is the best conceivable public? And so one is led on to inquire into the nature and conditions of cultural health and prosperity.

I will illustrate with a line of reflection that has occupied myself a good deal. Harking back from Blake one notes that the establishment of the Augustan tradition was associated with—indeed, it involved—a separation, new and abrupt, between sophis-

ticated culture and popular. Anticipating the problem of bringing home as convincingly and vividly as possible to (say) students of modern social and political questions what is meant by saying that there was, in the seventeenth century, a real culture of the people, one thinks first of Dryden's contemporary, Bunyan. If *The Pilgrim's Progress* is a humane masterpiece, that is in spite of the bigoted sectarian creed that Bunyan's allegory, in detail as in sum, directs itself to enforcing. In spite of his aim, a humane masterpiece resulted because he belonged to the civilization of his time, and that meant, for a small-town 'mechanick', participating in a rich traditional culture.

It is on the reader approaching as a literary critic that this truth compels itself (others seem to miss it).[5] Take, for instance, this passage, which such a reader would fix on as representative of Bunyan's art:

Christian: Pray, who are your kindred there, if a man may be so bold?

By-ends: Almost the whole Town; and in particular, my Lord *Turn-about*, my Lord *Timeserver*, my Lord *Fair-speech*, (from whose ancestors that Town first took its name), also Mr. *Smoothman*, Mr. *Facing-both-ways*, Mr. *Anything;* and the Parson of our Parish, Mr. *Two-tongues*, was my Mother's own Brother by Father's side; and to tell you the truth, I am become a Gentleman of good Quality; yet my Great Grandfather was but a Waterman, looking one way and rowing another; and I got most of my estate by the same occupation.

Christian: Are you a married man?

---

[3]The second interrogative sentence of the stanza Blake made a number of attempts at completing before he threw up the job.

[4]The following, both in its curiously striking qualities—it clearly comes from a remarkable poet, and in what I take to be its lack of self-sufficiency as a poem, seems to me a representatively suggestive document of the case I have been trying to describe:

> Truly, my Satan, thou art but a dunce,
> And dost not know the garment from the man;
> Every harlot was a virgin once,
> Nor canst thou ever change Kate to Nan.
>
> Tho' thou art worship'd by the names divine
> Of Jesus and Jehovah, thou art still
> The Son of Morn in weary night's decline,
> The lost traveller's dream under the hill.

[5]See, *e.g.* two books reviewed in *Scrutiny* for March, 1938: *John Bunyan: Maker of Myths*, by Jack Lindsay, and *John Bunyan: Mechanick Preacher*, by William York Tindall.

By-ends: Yes, and my Wife is a very virtuous woman, the Daughter of a virtuous woman; she was my Lady *Fain-ing's* daughter, therefore she came of a very honourable Family, and is arrived to such a pitch of breeding, that she knows how to carry it to all, even to Prince and Peasant. 'Tis true we somewhat differ in Religion from those of the stricter sort, yet but in two small points: First, we never strive against Wind and Tide: Secondly, we are always most zealous when Religion goes in his Silver Slippers; we love much to walk with him in the Street, if the Sun shines, and the People applaud him.

The critic notes that the names and racy turns of speech here are organically *of* the style; a style that clearly (and not the less so for there being literary associations) concentrates and intensifies the life of popular idiom. This life, running so richly into the placing nickname and the proverbial epitome, is unmistakably the expression of a vigorous humane culture. For what is involved is not merely an idiomatic raciness of speech, expressing a strong vitality, but a traditional art of social living, with its mature habits of judgment and valuation. We must beware of idealizing uncritically, but the fact is plain. There would have been no Bunyan (as there would before him have been no Shakespeare) if in his time, with all its disadvantages from a modern point-of-view, there had not been, living in the daily life of the people, a rich traditional culture—a culture that has disappeared so completely that modern revolutionaries, social reformers and Utopists do not commonly seem to have any notion of the kind of thing that has been lost.

This then is what the literary critic has to deduce from his reading. If he finds that others, interested primarily in social reform and social history, do not seem properly impressed by such evidence, he can, by way of bringing home to them in how full a sense there is, behind the literature, a social culture and an art of living, call attention to Cecil Sharp's introduction to *English Folk-Songs from the Southern Appalachians*. Hearing that the English folk-song still persisted in the remoter valleys of those mountains Sharp, during the last war, went over to investigate, and brought back a fabulous haul. More than that, he discovered that the tradition of song and dance (and a reminder is in place at this point of the singing and dancing with which the pilgrims punctuate their progress in the second part of Bunyan's Calvinistic allegory) had persisted so vigorously because the whole context to which folk-song and folk-dance belong was there too: he discovered, in fact, a civilization or 'way of life' (in our Democratic parlance) that was truly an art of social living.

The mountaineers were descended from settlers who had left this country in the eighteenth century.

> 'The region is from its inaccessibility a very secluded one . . the inhabitants have for a hundred years or more been completely isolated and shut off from all traffic with the rest of the world.

Their speech is English, not American, and, from the number of expressions they use that have long been obsolete elsewhere, and the old-fashioned way in which they pronounce many of their words, it is clear that they are talking the language of a past day. They are a leisurely, cheery people in their quiet way, in whom the social instinct is very highly developed . . . They know their Bible intimately and subscribe to an austere creed, charged with Calvinism and the unrelenting doctrines of determinism or fatalism . . . They have an easy unaffected bearing and the unselfconscious manners of the well-bred . . . A few of those we met were able to read and write, but the majority were illiterate. They are however good talkers, using an abundant vocabulary racily and often picturesquely'.

'That the illiterate may nevertheless reach a high level of culture will surprise only those who imagine that education and cultivation are convertible terms. The reason, I take it, why these mountain people, albeit unlettered, have acquired so many of the essentials of culture, is partly to be attributed to the large amount of leisure they enjoy, without which, of course, no cultural development is possible, but chiefly to the fact that they have one and all entered at birth into the full enjoyment of their racial inheritance. Their language, wisdom, manners, and the many graces of life that are theirs, are merely racial attributes which have been gradually acquired and accumulated in past centuries and handed down generation by generation, each generation adding its quota to what it received . . .'

'. . . Of the supreme value of an inherited tradition, even when unenforced by any formal school education, our mountain community in the Southern Highlands is an outstanding example'.

Correlation of Cecil Sharp's introduction[6] with Bunyan should sufficiently confirm and enforce the significance attributed to Bunyan above. And Bunyan himself shows how the popular culture to which he bears witness could merge with literary culture at the level of great literature. The converse, regarding the advantages enjoyed by the literary writer, the 'intellectual', need not be stated: they are apparent in English literature from Shakespeare to Marvell. We see Marvell—it is, of course, for this reason I name him—as pre-eminently refined, European in sophistication, and intimately related to a tradition of courtly urbanity; but his refinement involves no insulation from the popular—the force of which judgment is brought out by contrast with Pope. In prose, compare Halifax with Dryden. Halifax (the Trimmer) is 'easy', 'natural' and urbane, a master of the spoken tone and movement; in short he is

[6]Since Sharp's volumes are not everywhere accessible it had better be noted here that the relevant parts of his introduction are extracted in an article in *Scrutiny* for September, 1935, entitled 'Lady Novelists and the Lower Orders'.

unmistakably of the Restoration; but his raciness and idiomatic life relate him as unmistakably to Bunyan. I don't think I am being fanciful when I say that when Dryden gets lively, as in the preface to *All for Love,* he tends towards the Cockney; he assimilates, in fact, with L'Estrange. At least, his polite idiomatic ease is wholly of the coffee-house, that new organ of metropolitan culture the vibration of which seems essentially to exclude any intimate relations with Bunyan's world. The exclusive, or insulating, efficacy of the politeness of Augustan verse, even in Pope, whose greatness manifests itself in his power of transcending the Augustan, is at any rate obvious; and Pope's politeness belongs to the same world as the politeness of Addison's prose. Where, in short, Augustan convention and idiom, with their social suggestion, prevail, sophisticated culture cuts itself off from the traditional culture of the people.

The eighteenth century, significantly, had a habit of attempting the naïve, and, characteristically, evoked its touching simplicities of low life in modes that, Augustan tone and movement being inescapable, evoked at the same time the elegant and polite. It is one of the manifestations of Blake's genius that he, unique in this, can—the evidence is apparent here and there in *Poetical Sketches* (1783)—be genuinely, in verse that has nothing Augustan about it, of the people (popular London in his time was clearly still something of a 'folk'). The mention of this aspect of Blake serves to bring out by contrast the significance of Wordsworth's kind of interest in humble and rustic life. It is essentially—in so far as it is more than nominal—an interest in something felt as external to the world to which he himself belongs, and very remote from it: the reaction that Wordsworth represents against the Augustan century doesn't mean any movement towards re-establishing the old organic relations between literary culture and the sources of vitality in the general life. By Wordsworth's death, the Industrial Revolution had done its work, and the traditional culture of the people was no longer there, except vestigially.

No one, then, seriously interested in modern literature can feel that it represents a satisfactory cultural order. But if anyone should conclude that it ought therefore—the literature that the literary critic finds significant—to be contemned, and that a really significant contemporary literature would have the Marxising or Wellsian kind of relation to social, political and economic problems, he may be reminded that but for the persisting literary tradition, the history I have so inadequately sketched would have been lost, and our notions of what a popular culture might be, and what relations might exist between it and a 'highbrow' culture, would have been very different. And it needs stressing that where there isn't, in the literary critic's sense, a significant contemporary literature the literary tradition—the 'mind' (and mind includes memory) —is not fully live. To have a vital literary culture we must have a literature that is a going concern; and that will be what, under present conditions of civilization, it has to be. *Where* it is can be

determined only by the literary critic's kind of judgment.

What one has to suggest in general by way of urging on students of politics and society the claims of literary studies (I don't mean the ordinary academic kind) to be regarded as relevant and important is that thinking about political and social matters ought to be done by minds of some real literary education, and done in an intellectual climate informed by a vital literary culture. More particularly, of course, there are, capable of endless development and illustration, the hints for the social historian and the sociologist I have thrown out in the course of my argument. These all involve the principle that literature will yield to the sociologist, or anyone else, what it has to give only if it is approached as literature. For what I have in mind is no mere industrious searching for 'evidence', and collecting of examples, in whatever happens to have been printed and preserved. The 'literature' in question is something in the definition of which terms of value-judgment figure essentially, and something accessible only to the reader capable of intelligent and sensitive criticism.

I am thinking, in this insistence, not of the actual business of explicit valuation, but of the ability to respond appropriately and appreciatively to the subtleties of the artist's use of language and to the complexities of his organizations. And I am not thinking merely of poetry. It is to poetry, mainly, that I have made my illustrative references, but if one were enumerating the more obvious kinds of interest that literature has to offer the sociologist, prose fiction, it is plain, would figure very largely. There seems to be a general view that anyone can read a novel; and the uses commonly made of novels as evidence, sociological or other, would seem to illustrate that view. Actually, to use as evidence or illustration the kinds of novel that are most significant and have most to offer requires an uncommon skill, the product of a kind of training that few readers submit themselves to. For instance, the sociologist can't learn what Jane Austen has to teach about the part played by the family in the life, individual and social, of her times, so different in this respect from ours, without being, in reading her, a much more intelligent critic than any professional authority he is likely to have gone to for guidance. Nor, without being an original critic, adverted and sensitized by experience and the habit of critical analysis, can the social psychologist learn what Conrad has to teach about the social nature of the individual's 'reality'.

These instances must suffice—I choose them for their suggestive diversity. Instead of offering any further, I will end by making a general contention in other terms. Without the sensitizing familiarity with the subtleties of language, and the insight into the relations beween abstract or generalizing thought and the concrete of human experience, that the trained frequentation of literature alone can bring, the thinking that attends social and political studies will not have the edge and force it should.

F. R. Leavis.

'THE DISCIPLINE OF LETTERS'

A SOCIOLOGICAL NOTE.

IN the last number of *Scrutiny* we examined the university career of a peculiarly gifted man, the late A. C. Haddon, who combined the abilities of a specialist opening up a new field of knowledge with those of an exceptionally inspiring teacher. It was a career that could hardly be called successful by worldly standards. Chance has given us the opportunity to complete the findings by contrast: we may now inspect the record of a man whom in our time an ancient university has delighted to honour.

It must be said first that this collection[1] of the late George Gordon's letters, made by his widow, seems intended primarily to show that he was an affectionate relative and had many distinguished friends. It is what emerges incidentally that matters, for it is of course in his public and representative capacities, as professor of literature and of poetry, that we are concerned with him here. He has in fact no other importance, since there is, as the blurb tactfully puts it, a 'scarcity of more formal monuments to his learning and literary craftsmanship'.

Gordon was the able Scots student who collects Firsts and prizes by cannily directed industry. Coming from Glasgow as already a brilliant classic, after skimming through History and Greats he saw possibilities, as others have done, in the more recent department of English and transferred his attentions thither—English studies being, apart from the linguist's claims on them, notoriously the prerogative of your classic (generally of your not-good-enough classic). So he attracted Raleigh's attention by editing a typically academic collection of essays, *English Literature and the Classics,* to which he himself contributed a piece on Theophrastus; this, he wrote, convinced Raleigh that he would do for the English School. With Raleigh's backing he secured an English fellowship at Magdalen and managed before his fellowship ran out to land with it the Chair of English at Leeds, from whence he returned to succeed Raleigh as Merton Professor of Literature in 1922. In 1928 he became President of Magdalen, and subsequently Vice-Chancellor, but his merely academic offices, except as symptoms of success, are beside the point. We must note rather his election to the Oxford Chair of Poetry in 1934, his appointment to the original Selection Committee of the Book Society along with Walpole and Priestley (as to which he wrote 'I couldn't wish for better company'), his election to the various literary societies that carry social prestige, his undertaking a series of popular fifteen-

[1] *The Letters of G. S. Gordon,* 1902-1942 (*O.U.P.,* 10/6).

minute broadcast talks on great literature, his editing a selection of *Times'* third leaders, etc. In contrast to Haddon who achieved so much with so little public assistance, Gordon, in spite of every worldly opportunity in the way of financial endowment, social sanction and professional backing, has left nothing except a few published lectures and addresses. Nevertheless they have their interest and their place in literary history. For though they are not literary criticism they do give us an insight into the conditions which control literary studies in the universities and are therefore of the greatest value at this moment for us. For if any educational reform as a whole is to be achieved in this country after the war—and everything suggests that attempts in that direction will be made—it must centre on the universities, and there on the humanities. It is impossible to discuss such subjects in the air, without relation to the academic world which conditions them. And that sociology of the academic world which was desiderated in the last number of *Scrutiny* would certainly need to take note of the history of George Gordon. In contrast to Haddon, he was a green bay-tree specimen: what enabled him to flourish? What sources of satisfaction did he provide for his order? we must ask. We may conveniently start by examining his record with respect to literature. for sociology and literary criticism are mutually enlightening.

His chief productions are his two inaugural lectures, *The Discipline of Letters,* delivered before the University of Oxford in 1923, and *Poetry and the Moderns,* delivered in the same circumstances in 1934. Both are professions of belief, with a difference: between them the deluge had occurred, as far as literary criticism is concerned. As late as 1923 Gordon, who evidently lived in a literary backwater, was unaware of any challenge to what he stood for. The discipline of letters, he proclaims, is represented by the Oxford School of English. This is two-fold. On the one hand linguistic-philological studies as an end in themselves. On the other, scholarship—the ideal of perfect editing, that is, a frivolous one which is hostile to any real standards in literature, since any text long enough dead is equally meet to be edited, the credit consists in producing the perfect index etc. to a piece of writing not necessarily worth publishing in the first place. Or in Garrod's own words—and the jargon is characteristic—'In this University Mercury and Philologia, after many deeds of settlement (for the lady has been difficult) are partners, I hope, for life'. He followed this up by an attack on the Royal Commission's *Report on English,* apparently because that proposed that English should take the place traditionally occupied by classics, and should in short be taken seriously as an educational and cultural study. To take literature seriously, he declared, is 'an affront to life'. An inexplicable attitude for a Professor of English Literature to strike in his inaugural lecture? But before we look further into this extraordinary position we will attend his next public appearance on an almost identical occasion.

Poetry and the Moderns, eleven years later, reveals the for-

merly complacent academic uneasy; if he is dimly aware that he has not a leg to stand on, so to speak, he is still feeling around for a stance to maintain his self-esteem. We note he invokes for support his friends and predecessors Bridges, de Sélincourt, Garrod, Raleigh; with the like-minded to back him he takes up a position of superiority to what he cannot understand and feels as a threat to his prestige. The lecture is nothing but a series of appeals to his audience to respond in the cheapest way, he is out to capitalize the stock responses of the herd, he jeers in order to elicit sniggers of approval, and so on. The lecture is of course only memorable as one contribution to the academic war against contemporary poetry and literary criticism which, raging from about 1925 for a dozen years or more, will in a century or so no doubt become a subject for sanctioned literary research.[2] That campaign looks negligible now, but it was conducted with every expression of malice, misrepresentation and personal spite that the academic pen and tongue could command—the scholarly conscience having nothing to do with a critical conscience, or with any other kind, it would appear. We notice in Gordon's lecture that the focus of his ill-will is Mr. T. S. Eliot, and this was generally so, because as poet and literary critic Mr. Eliot represented a challenge which the 'lovers of a continuous literary decorum' could neither overlook nor hope to take up without disaster: some of them envied his success as a poet and all were jealous of his literary influence. Hence the choice of an attack on 'the moderns' as a subject for an inaugural lecture. But even in 1934 it was too late, the tide of public opinion had already turned. Even then Professor Claud Colleer Abbott was editing the letters of Gerard Manly Hopkins (Oxford, 1935) with the implication that they were as important as Keats's—to value highly the poems of Hopkins was another way to incur academic odium, Bridges, in reluctantly and patronizingly editing them, having indicated the permissible degree of admiration. And when in 1937 Mr. Humphrey House, also of Oxford, produced an expensive edition of Hopkins's Notebooks and Trivia, in themselves of no particular interest, with all the panoply of scholarship including biographies of everyone mentioned in the text and biblio-

[2]Material will be found covering general as well as detailed aspects in the back numbers of *Scrutiny*. Other documents besides *Poetry and the Modern World* are John Sparrow, *Sense and Poetry* (1934); F. L. Lucas, *The Criticism of Poetry*, Warton Lecture 1933 and his contribution 'English' to *Cambridge University Studies* (1933); articles and essays by C. S. Lewis, Profs. Garrod and de Sélincourt, Logan Pearsall Smith, G. M. Young, Desmond MacCarthy, Humbert Wolfe, J. C. Squire and other contributors to the Sunday papers and literary weeklies of the period, and of course Dean Inge; papers read to the English Association and such literary societies; and a manifestation of the spirit of the campaign permanently enshrined in *The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature* (ed. George Sampson).

graphies of the MSS. etc., well, if the citadel had not actually fallen at least solidarity had been sacrificed. Or perhaps only consistency, for that section of the academic party which had put on record its opinion that any critic who thought Hopkins a considerable poet was thereby 'certifiable'[3] was at least put out of countenance. But Gordon had an instinct against risking being caught out on a limb: he ends by manoeuvring into the favourite post-die-hard academic position. He ends with a profession, not this time of the Discipline of Letters (Mercury wedded to Philologia) but of broad-mindedness. He manages to put the critics he is attacking, instead of himself, in the attitude of intolerance by the usual trick of misrepresentation and even invention. We shall return to this later.

Altogether it is a curious history for a professor of English Literature and worth investigating. The *Letters* recently published illuminate it considerably. Gordon succeeded Raleigh at Oxford and was formed by him, so we must go a stage further back, to the case of Raleigh himself. For Raleigh was not only the first professor of English Literature at Oxford, he became a cult. His idiosyncrasies became the mould of form and his prejudices and prepossessions were standardized. We can see that while Raleigh made the Oxford English School he never took literature seriously, apart from its succubus, scholarship. He is an example of the most dangerous kind of academic, the man who hasn't enough ability to set up on his own as a creative artist and bears literature a grudge in consequence.[4] His letters[5] run on humorously about whatever poet he is writing on (Shakespeare, Blake and Wordsworth figure in turn as Bill)—the effect is to place himself on a level with them or whatever literary figure he writes about. His lectures seem to have been dramatic readings studded with epigrams. His professorial writings are all, implicitly or explicitly, about the inferiority of literature to life, an antithesis which he propagated continually, and he is seen perpetually anxious to show that he was not a don, not a professional man of letters, not a serious teacher of literature, (though he was quite willing to accept a comfortable living by undertaking to be all three).[6] These characteristics, combined with a denigration of all literary criticism (which did not prevent him from publishing a number of books and resenting adverse reviews of them) when contrasted with his unquestioning

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[3]F. L. Lucas, *Cambridge University Studies*, 'English'.

[4]The first literary critic, he wrote, was a eunuch, and literary appreciation is an emotion for spinsters.

[5]*The Letters of Sir Walter Raleigh*, 1879-1922 (Methuen, 2 vols.).

[6]The comparison that places Raleigh best is with Leslie Stephen. Though earning his living as a free-lance, having given up his fellowship on grounds of conscience, Stephen never wrote without having something to say and worth listening to, worked out a method of literary criticism on a sound basis, and respected his function. He has already been the subject of an article in this journal (Vol. VII. No. 4).

belief in the virtues of good-mixing in the best company, combine to make an unpleasant impression. A life devoted to teaching literature in this spirit is bound to become uneasy. By 1906 he was declaring 'I begin to hate criticism. Nothing can come of it', and he seems before then to have been conscious of the futility of his kind of English studies. 'If I am accused on Judgment Day of teaching literature, I shall plead that I never believed in it and that I maintained a wife and children' he wrote in 1921. This is an attitude by no means confined to Raleigh or Oxford, and is seen, characteristically, to produce a cynicism about the academic function that is, to put it in the lowest terms, unnecessary (readers may prefer a stronger adjective). It is not necessary to acquiesce, as the Raleighs do, on the ground that there is no alternative. 'We go to Glasgow about the 10th to get my ridiculous degree', he wrote once. 'I call it ridiculous because I have been in the kitchen where these things are cooked'. This is not a healthy scepticism, it is an excuse for taking a hand in the cooking as well as for benefiting by it. The next step is to make the Wodehouses free of the ridiculous degree.

This is Gordon's academic heredity. He shows what happens to ability when it is exposed to the atmosphere of classical studies pursued without any standards other than those of scholarship and of social snobbishness. One is not surprised to learn from his letters that the important things in life are (1) good mixing—a good man is one who likes a good dinner and knows the right people and (2) scholarship for its own sake. We see too that one corollary to the latter belief is that ability to edit a text is the only and sufficient test of academic fitness, hence the man who has edited any insignificant text is qualified to practice literary criticism and to direct literary studies. We see Gordon, through his letters, filling all the university posts he can, at home and abroad, with men who have proved their right to 'a senior post' by editing something, and with every conviction of righteousness spreading despair and blight on university students of English throughout the British Commonwealth. We see him believing, as he was taught by Raleigh, that the summit of achievement in modern English is represented by the writings of Charles Lamb and Robert Louis Stevenson—to write on Elia is 'the last test and pledge'; he is 'steeped in the *Letters* . . . I have read them for fifteen years; and the only fault I find in them is that they make all other Letters seem poor and thin. Even Stevenson must not be read till some time has elapsed; or he seems a green boy'[7] (1920). The other great figure in this gallery is Johnson. I say figure because it is not Johnson's prose writings and poetry whose value is recognized, it is the club figure which can be used for purposes of solidarity (though of course Johnson's club and Johnson's personality were

[7]The whole of this letter (September 7th, 1920) should be read. He had written an article on Lamb by invitation for the *Times Literary Supplement* and is overcome at his temerity in accepting.

not of that kind). Lamb, Stevenson and Johnson evidently united to form an ideal centre[8] and in so far as Gordon had any particular taste it was for mannered prose with a 'personal' content, while archaising and pastiches and light verse seem to have been the accepted form for academic *jeux d'esprit*. It was not incompatible with such tastes that he should have sponsored Sir Hugh Walpole's novels and P. G. Wodehouse, joined the former in his anti-highbrow battles, and have done his best to keep the academic world clear of the infection of modern literature. That he should reject the real poetry of his time while affecting to find virtue in the academic verse of Bridges also follows. It is not surprising either that he should believe that otherwise poetry has, so to speak, run its race: 'We still have our celiars, with all the old vintages from Chios to Chilswell'. Bridges's 'experiments'—academic tinkering with metrics and spelling, devoid of a personal rhythm—are the kind he can sanction, recognizing in them a respectable ancestry. In this Museum Milton is inevitably, as Leslie Stephen says he was even in Johnson's time, 'a tabooed figure' for criticism.

A bird's-eye view of the culture I have tried to describe is available in the form of an elegant little book of essays published in 1920, R. W. Chapman's *Portrait of a Scholar* (Oxford). Gordon wrote to the author when it appeared, 'I find in these essays not only something that has never been so well expressed, but the flower of a mode of life for you and me seven or eight years old'. Here we find essays on trivial subjects turned with that playfulness which so becomes a scholar ('Silver Spoons', 'Proper Names in Poetry') or serious ones treated in the style of Elia ('Thoughts on Spelling Reform' begins: 'I protest I know little of phonetics'). One is tempted to pause and Veblenize[9] the spectacle. For instance, consider the significance of book-collecting in this culture—it has no more relation to literature than stamp-collecting, but carries a far higher *cachet* in respect to the greater income and esoteric knowledge needed. It would never occur to anyone in this group to refuse to acquiesce in such a merely conventional value, to question it even would be in bad taste. Spoons and furniture are valuable only if they are old, as certain books only because they are rare; hence contemporary poetry could not by definition be any good unless made on strict classical models and in every way reminiscent of them. Modern letters can only have value if they pretend to be old—Elia and R.L.S. will pass but never Dickens,

[8]How readily this abstraction of English literature could be assimilated with the classics is shown by another of the group, R. W. Chapman, who refers to 'the best odes of Horace, the best things in Boswell or Elia' (*Portrait of a Scholar*) in a significant context.

[9]I am reminded that this trope may not be understood, since Veblen's works are scarcely known in England. The reference is of course to his *Theory of a Leisure Class* in particular. An excellent introduction to and critique of his work is J. A. Hobson's *Veblen* in the *Modern Sociologists* series (Chapman and Hall, 1936).

who is deplored for lacking 'style'; the best living writers of English prose, we are told, 'having regard to their manner only'(!) are Bridges, Raleigh, Belloc, E. V. Lucas and Masefield, 'their prose is good because their models are good . . seventeenth and eighteenth-century models [which they] have found adequate to the most exacting demands of their twentieth-century form and invention'. For such a group with such values and preconceptions a live contemporary use of language as that of a Hopkins or Eliot, the real art of a Conrad and Henry James, will fall on deaf ears, and the most genuinely witty, urbane and brilliant critic, Santayana, will make no impression.[10] Real literature is necessarily closed to them, and they are aware of it only to resent it.

To look with Veblen's eyes at this 'mode of life', as Gordon rightly called it, is at least to make one point—that its social standards and its conventional literary and cultural values are only different aspects of the same mentality. To threaten its security in any way, by casting aspersions against the genuineness of a literary idol like Landor or Milton or by suggesting that the social structure needs revision, is to get the same reaction. Gordon's letters about the General Strike [that deplorable episode in the history of the universities when undergraduates in plus fours and fellows of colleges marched off in organized gangs to break the workers' strike] are almost unbelievable (see pp. 181-3). Particularly instructive is his gloating over the defeat of Labour and his savage jibes at the ecclesiastics who tried to exert a Christian influence over the middle-class (when the bishops called upon educational authorities like Gordon for support he told them to go to Hell). He concludes: 'We've had the Great Strike, and in some ways it's going

[10]Thirty-five years ago Arnold Bennett, then at the height of his powers as a creative artist, was remarking in *The New Age* 'the characteristic inability of the typical professor [of English] to toddle alone when released from the leading-strings of tradition'. 'For their own sakes' he continued, 'professors of literature ought to bind themselves by oaths never to say anything about any author who was not safely dead twenty years before they were born. Such an ordinance would at least ensure their dignity'. It was like Bennett's shrewdness to pick out this key weakness and correlate it with the defects of their professional writings. Raleigh, he declared, had not yet voiced criticism of his contemporaries: 'But wait a few years. Wait until something genuinely new and original comes along and you will see' for, says Bennett, look at the critical works he has already published—'They are as hollow as a drum and as unoriginal as a bride-cake; nothing but vacuity with an icing of phrases'. In 1911 he was complaining that there did not exist in English that body of criticism which the French artist has to cut his teeth on. For this purpose, he wrote, 'I have no hesitation in de-classing the whole professorial squad—Bradley, Herford, Dowden, Walter Raleigh, Elton, Saintsbury'. Reprinted in *Books and Persons*.

to be as valuable as the Great War . . . We shall feel the benefit of the public object lesson to Labour for the rest of our lifetime at least'. We notice that religion is conceived entirely as a social institution to which it is necessary to conform (of course one has one's children christened, and goes to Church sometimes because then you get better servants). This fury at the bishops who tried to implement the theoretical implications of the Established Church in an economic crisis exactly corresponds to the emotional reaction to literary critics who refused to play the game of letters and actually tried to replace the counters by real values. These forms of behaviour are just as much 'flowers' of that 'mode of life' as *Portrait of a Scholar*. This 'mode of life' has a vested interest in the profession of letters identical with its economic interests. A life devoted to the humanities means not following a vocation but taking up the genteelest profit-making pursuit, one which confers a high caste on its members; literary appreciation must obey the same laws as other expressions of social superiority.[11] The Discipline of Letters is seen to be simply the rules of the academic English club.[12] Only thus can we account for the curious spectacle of a professor of poetry and literature inaugurating his terms of office by insulting the greatest living poet (*Ash Wednesday* had appeared four years earlier) and decrying literary criticism, by denouncing State proposals to take seriously the study of literature as an educational process, and declaring that in his university at least literature should be studied only in its aspects of philology and scholarship, while post-graduate work should be restricted to learning to edit texts. The pusillanimity of the academic character outside the sciences is a matter of common experience, it is a product of the club spirit no doubt; so that when a Gordon gives tongue so boldly we may be sure he knows the whole pack is ready to yelp with him.

Clearly Gordon had this value for the society to which he belonged, that while he served as a public figure going through the motions expected of a scholar and a gentleman he was also a

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[11]The difference between a vested interest and the dispassionate pursuit of truth is shown by the contrasting behaviour of the humanists and the scientists when faced by similar situations. University schools of science and mathematics did not make fools of themselves about the revolutionary physics, for example, which were accepted without any display of feeling.

[12]A useful index to the constitution of this club is afforded by the prefaces to works of literary criticism and scholarship published in the last decade and a half. Tributes of gratitude therein express not real indebtedness but are advertisements that the author (1) knows eminent persons (2) wishes to exhibit solidarity with the right people. A third function may often be noted, that of disguising real indebtedness, where ideas, analysis, method or information have been lifted from the 'wrong' quarters to which it would be embarrassing to have to make acknowledgments.

mouthpiece for its instinctive attitudes of self-protection. What oft was thought but ne'er so well expressed, was the academic reception of his *Poetry and the Modern World*. We noticed, in summarising this later inaugural lecture, how his position had changed from the complacent insolence of *The Discipline of Letters*. Now he would like to be on both sides at once, and though he cannot conceal his hatred of all that Eliot stood for he makes a great show of open-mindedness, as in extending cautious (but ludicrously undiscriminating) patronage to the young Oxford poets. Let us appreciate every dead poet equally (so long as we are not asked to think less highly of, say, Milton and the Romantic movement than we have always understood it to be correct to think), he says, and let us not take seriously any poet now alive (except to raise our hats to our classically-sanctioned Bridges and Housman).[13] It is 'the literary groups now vocal' who exhibit 'narrowness and intolerance', he complains and ends on this rather plaintive note.

This was a cunning move, obviously more serviceable than the last-ditch foaming-at-the-mouth attitude. It kept pace with the quiet ratting that was occurring at this time on the Hopkins controversy, and inaugurated the shift of opinion about 'the modern movement' that was noticeable very soon after. For such a social group, though it does not move or alter essentially, has to modify its facial expression from time to time in order to survive. Take the affair of Hopkins, which we have outlined—by the time Mr. House had published the fruits of his scholarly labours what bad taste it would have been to suggest that they were superfluous! The critics, that is, had succeeded in persuading the great world that

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[13]The sociologist would have to pay special attention to the place of Housman in this society. His claim to be in the Bentley tradition covered his pathological rudeness to other scholars, and as a scholar who had proved his devotion to the ideal by specializing in insignificant texts, he was permitted a degree of privilege otherwise unknown. His soundness in essentials was proved when he delivered the Rede lecture on 'The Name and Nature of Poetry'—its reception and the use made of it are of great interest. Another apparent exception to the general code of the academic order is Mr. C. S. Lewis, but the eccentricity of theoretical Christian fervour is permitted to him since he took care to show from the beginning that he held entirely conservative views on the real tests of conformity—Shelley, Milton, Wodehouse, university English studies, and 'modern' critics. He published a book of essays in literary criticism significantly called *Rehabilitations* where all these subjects are treated on orthodox lines. Another necessary test of conformity is represented by Bradley on Shakespeare: though he has been blown upon, some would say blown up, it is *de rigueur* to intimate respect for him by way of showing hostility to the school of Shakespeare criticism which has dared to question Bradley's assumptions and method, to replace the comfortably known by the alarmingly unfamiliar.

they were right about Hopkins and the academic club wrong, and Hopkins had become a classic in face of the club's persistent blackballing. [This is the mysterious process known in the text-books as 'having stood the test of time']. Hopkins had to be incorporated into the conventional pantheon. But if the club finds it politic to make concessions, it will only make them on its own terms. In the matter of Hopkins, Professor Abbott's introduction[14] to the letters is a transparent example of its technique of accommodation without reconstitution. Hopkins could not be radically altered, because he was dead; he could only be misrepresented. A more recent instance is Lord David Cecil's *The English Poets* (Cresset Press, 1941) where Hopkins is linked with Patmore, the palm being given to the latter whereas 'Hopkins is difficult not for his thoughts but for his mode of expression'; conversely Bridges is jacked up by pairing him off with Yeats. The opposite process is used to write down Eliot who is dismissed in the same breath as Auden and Spender; the 'new school led by T. S. Eliot' is pronounced to be a dead end, while 'the main English tradition' in modern poetry, we are told, is kept going by 'Dorothy Wellesley and W. J. Turner' (who oddly enough edit the series in which Lord David's book appears), 'the Sitwells' and Ruth Pitter. It is obvious that these are not judgments of literary criticism but gestures of social solidarity—the only kind of criticism that isn't Bad Form.

But let us consider another example of this principle at work. One of the few entertaining spectacles in this last depressing decade has been that of the academics who had shown themselves most hostile to modern literary criticism recognizing that Eliot had achieved a lasting position in spite of them; but while desiring a place on the platform alongside him they couldn't afford to show too glaring an inconsistency. We may well ask how this came about. Mr. Eliot had in fact become respectable for extra-literary reasons (there is no greater proof of respectability than the clerical audiences drawn by *The Rock*), while his poetry and essays had won through to the general educated public on their own merits, assisted by the 'narrow and intolerant critics'. Thus the former literary Bolshevik (*ut* Dean Inge) became fit even to preside over the Classical Association. Mr. Eliot has accordingly become incorporated into the canon of accepted Literature—which must be accepted and may not be criticised; and those critics who only recently were outlawed for daring to insist that *The Sacred Wood* and *The Waste Land* were important are now rebuked by the same pens for venturing to disagree with later critical pronouncements of his. The academics, that is, have not changed their skins at all, merely camouflaged them. They still object, as they always have objected, to the practice of real literary criticism, which necessarily menaces their self-esteem and professional reputation. The sociologist would note that for them it is unforgivable to be too far ahead of public opinion; even after public opinion has caught up

[14] v. *Scrutiny*, Vol. IV, No. 2.

with, and forced the club to endorse, the discoveries of the pioneering critic, his orginal offence remains and he will bear always the stigma of harbouring dangerous views. Gordon's protective device has become the modern academic's wear.[15] He does not deny that there may be something in latter-day writers, only, he says, we must be tolerant. This in practice means that you may acclaim Eliot's *Collected Poems* if you will do the same for *The Testament of Beauty;* you may be interested in Kafka and Conrad if you will grant that Wodehouse and Sayers are equally incomparable; you may take Eliot's literary criticism seriously only if you will allow Lamb's to be just as good. Well, isn't that a handsome enough offer?

No, for the literary critic and the educationist will insist that the question they must put to academic authority remains what it always was: are we or are we not to be allowed to apply real standards, to work with real values instead of currency-counters? Apparently the answer still is that we are not. It was Henry James who declared that 'The confusion of kinds is the inelegance of letters and the stultification of values'.

Gordon's death did not then mark the end of the epoch in academic literary history that Raleigh inaugurated. Every university school of English appears to have its Gordons, and they predominate. Mr. C. S. Lewis's programme for an English School and his defence of it[16] does not differ from Gordon's *Discipline of Letters* sixteen years earlier, either in tone or content, nor did he seem aware of the damaging criticisms to which his assumptions and arguments are open. The book was warmly received in academic quarters, where Mr. Lewis was credited with brilliant wit and a powerful intellect, and from thence came assertions that a blow had been struck for the cause. A really up-to-date intellectual, combining the scholarly virtues with critical genius, had taken service under them, we were given to understand. If there had been the slightest indication of originality in Mr. Lewis's outlook or of criticism of the *status quo* in his programme, what outraged bellows would have come from that herd instead! We may conclude that the academic club will go on recruiting its kind so long as it has a stranglehold on appointments in nearly every university, and will continue to put up *à-la-mode* Gordons to maintain its supremacy.[17] It is useless, we may deduce and must point out, for state schemes

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[15]*cf. Tradition and Romanticism* by B. Ifor Evans (1940). Our reviewer (*Scrutiny*, Vol. VIII, No. 4) observed: 'The conventional taste of thirty or forty years ago had at least the merit of a consistent view of literary history . . . Your modern academic presents a confused and unhappy picture in comparison. While careful to show that he has outgrown the old prejudices, he nevertheless accepts no modern revaluation of the tradition, but tries desperately to make the most of all worlds'.

[16]*Rehabilitations and Other Essays*, 1939. The review in *Scrutiny*, Vol. VIII, No. 1, contains the relevant information and the appropriate criticisms.

of educational reform at the university level to be broached without considering the realities of the situation. The reforms must be directed to the right quarters.

We started by presenting a question: what does the academic world gain by endowing and countenancing a Gordon and snubbing and starving a Haddon? We can now see that it gains immediately in a psychological sense, because a Gordon enables a bankrupt and decrepit tradition to feel that it can not only stand on its legs but can actually hold up its head and cut a fine figure after all. Whereas a Haddon makes it uncomfortable, painfully aware of deficiencies and the possibility of having to return to the Button Mould. The existence on its doorstep of a Haddon becomes a reproach and therefore an intolerable nuisance. No wonder he had occasion to complain of the step-motherly behaviour of his Alma Mater. But in the long run, we may predict, it will be the Gordons who are the disability. An impatient revolutionary movement in education, the new order that is more than likely to follow the peace, will be tempted to send the whole system down the drain, not only the academic club but the humanistic studies that they have discredited. It would be hard to justify a claim that a university school of English, as described by Raleigh, Gordon, Mr. C. S. Lewis, is of value to the community or the individual. There is no future for an order that is incarnated in a Gordon; and it deserves the fate it has invited. But is it not possible to make some attempt to salvage English studies? The first step, clearly, is to take them out of the hands of the old-style academic who, in the name of the discipline of letters, bans any attempted interest by the young in the finest poetry and novels and the most profitable criticism of their own time while welcoming the corrupters of standards, and who forces on the student an intolerably arbitrary view of poetry and the history of our literature. And this is the more indefensible when we look into the authority on which this academic's claims to competence are based.

The claims are ultimately made in the name of the classical tradition, that your genuine humanist is the familiar classic, scholar and gentleman that the academic could once claim to be. When English schools were first formed, the classically-trained were the only academics available with which to supplement the philologists. But if the classic ever was the salt of literary criticism (the evidence for it seems totally lacking) that salt has long since lost its savour. It has long been untrue to imply that the personnel of the academic English club is made up of such legendary people. The caste privi-

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[17]The sociologist would make some deductions from the terms in which the academic and higher reviewers hailed Mr. Geoffrey Tillotson's *Essays in Criticism and Research*. This appeared in 1940 with a preface elevating the claims of scholarship, followed by a number of essays designed to prove that it supersedes the critic's function. Our reviewer had occasion to point out that there are 'many insidious ways in which scholarship can become a mask for critical prejudice'.

leges of the classic, scholar and gentleman are now claimed, and the prejudices propagated, by those who are rarely the first, often have no real title to the second—and as for the third, perhaps that need not be discussed. The theory is one employed now by all sorts of intellectual incapables to disguise their inferiority. Though this is a process of evolution not unknown to the social historian, I believe, it none the less leaves its supporters in a weak position. And even if the theoretical claims are occasionally substantiable, is there not something more to be said, and urgently in need of saying, about the fitness of the classic for directing English studies? Gordon started with some natural endowment; his career seems to suggest that his training qualified him for nothing except the editing of classical texts. He could bring nothing but prejudices and an assurance of superiority to his new department, that air of saying gracefully something profound and final which disguises saying nothing, the style of *Times* third leaders and *Times Literary Supplement* leading articles which are notoriously the work of Greats products and their Cambridge equivalents. But how much more vicious when higher English studies are handled in the same spirit! Naturally enough, the believers in this kind of 'discipline' do not like the criticism that shifts something, the teaching that stimulates and matures.[18] The natural reaction of the academic English club, so constituted, has been that since they are incapable of doing anything themselves as directors and producers of literary studies, nobody else shall if they can help it (they are quite willing to help each other to help it, an activity which the organization of the academic world, as one large club, is peculiarly fitted to promote).

The stultifying effect on English studies of such a régime has long been apparent. The moral is that English studies must be cut free from the classical-scholarly tradition in every respect and at every level; must point out firmly that the ability to edit texts and make piddling comments on them is no more qualification by itself for an English university post than a certificate of librarianship since it is an ability that can be readily acquired by quite stupid

[18]Raleigh wrote to D. Nichol Smith from Oxford (1904): 'They told me in Liverpool that it was all-important to spend weary hours on diminishing the incapacity of dull students. I did not contradict them, but I didn't do it: I wrote a book. No one who understands the real thing cares twopence about the dull student, except as a man and a brother. Drink with him, pray with him; don't read with him, except for money'. English in the universities has been a good deal run on these lines. Whether the dull student is not generally a product of this convenient practice, and whether his dullness may not disappear in more favourable conditions—a stimulating environment, good guidance, a suitable course of study and so on—is a question which hasn't as a rule been allowed to disturb the comfortable assumption (so unmistakably acted on) that students in general are dull. It is significant that a Haddon does not find himself surrounded by dull students.

people with no interest in literature; and recruit new blood from, and enter into new connections with, the live studies instead of dead ones. A new deal for English could be initiated at once on the basis of the experimental English college and courses that were long ago outlined in this journal. With the aid of the allied studies—other modern literatures, particularly French, and the social sciences (history, anthropology, psychology, sociology, but cultural history and sociology in particular)—new and uniquely equipped specialists would be turned out whose centre in literary criticism and training in the methods and disciplines of other specialisms would enable them to work further and further into adjacent fields of knowledge with the most fruitful results. And it would equip them to do the work which the mere scholar trained only to edit texts cannot do but which literary criticism must get done. And there is work which other specialisms—psychology, sociology, history—notoriously need done and which only the trained literary critic can safely undertake, work which is waiting to be done because no one who is not a literary critic, in our special sense, can undertake it at all. A simple example lies to hand, in Raleigh's literary remains. Raleigh had most of his life contemplated writing a book on Chaucer. He never wrote it, and we know why. 'The Chaucer has got only so far, that I have mapped out and defined a lot of things that I should like to know and don't. "What the philologists should tell us and don't", "What students of French poetry should tell us and don't"; —these are hardly chapter titles' (*Letters*, 1903). Gordon, a much less intelligent man than Raleigh, characteristically comments (Preface to Raleigh's posthumous *On Writing and Writers*, 1926): 'They are the private chapter titles of more than one unwritten book on Chaucer nor can it well be otherwise while the tradition of his text remains uncertain'. Nor could it well be otherwise if the text were as certain as that of to-day's newspaper. What Raleigh wanted the philologist and the French mediaeval scholar to tell him was what only a literary critic could, who was incidentally a philologist and a specialist in early French poetry. Raleigh had come up against questions which no amount of scholarly information alone can determine, they can be 'settled' only by the methods of literary criticism. There is no good book on Chaucer's poetry because no first-class literary critic happens to have had sufficiently intense an interest in Chaucer to go to the immense trouble of acquiring the incidental specialisms and absorbing the masses of 'factual matter' that would equip him to decide *as a literary critic* the critical problems Chaucer raises. And until such a critic does there will not be the book on Chaucer we all need, let what Bentley of mediaeval studies there ever may be edit the text, or if the authentic text were suddenly revealed from Heaven. There is a similar difficulty about Donne—everyone has had the experience of consulting the great edition—for which we are all deeply grateful to Professor Grierson—and finding that there is no light thrown in the notes, the scholarly and textual notes, on our difficulties. This in my experience is true of all edited texts from the Elizabethan

dramatists right down to so apparently straightforward a specimen as Jane Austen's novels. The real difficulties of reading the text, the critical problems, seem to be outside the editor's province, or he is unaware of them because like most scholars he is not a literary critic, too often not even an intelligent reader. That Shakespeare texts cannot be finally determined by 'scientific' editing is now generally admitted. I don't mean that we should send scholarship packing—of course we can't do without it—but that we should insist that scholarship in the narrow sense is recognized for the tool it can only be and a useful tool only when in the right hands. 'I can hire mathematicians but mathematicians can't hire me' said Edison.

What English studies need then is not more scholarship but fresh contacts, cross-fertilization—a W. H. Rivers of the complex of cultural subjects of which the study of literature forms part, and the intellectual disciplines of which it can profitably draw upon to enrich its method. Failing his appearance, we can at least reorganize English studies on such a basis. Besides being educational in a real sense, so that English studies would be freed from that sense of futility so widely complained of by university students, it would give post-graduate and 'research' students a real field of useful work. And other studies would profit. But can anyone be so optimistic as to believe that any university reform less violent than a bloody revolution would make such a programme possible?

Q. D Leavis.

'LE MISANTHROPE' (II)

V.

WITH Act II, Sc. ii, the work of exposition is complete. The stage is cleared and Molière brings his batteries to bear on the procession of vain, empty, frivolous courtiers who have nothing better to do than engage Célimène in malicious chatter or attend some small function at Court.

ACASTE

A moins de voir Madame en être importunée,
Rien ne m'appelle ailleurs de toute la journée.

CLITANDRE

Moi, pourvu que je puisse être au petit couché,
Je n'ai point d'autre affaire où je sois attaché.

It is noticeable that almost every word uttered by these people about their friends or in the bitter exchanges between themselves is double edged. It returns like a boomerang to the speaker. Acaste remarks complacently:

Parbleu! je ne vois pas, lorsque je m'examine,
Où prendre aucun sujet d'avoir l'âme chagrine.

The implication is that the game of self-deception is so successful, that he is so shallow and empty that he is incapable of perceiving his shortcomings or experiencing the torment which afflicts Alceste. This becomes clearer in the brilliant portrait of the fop which emerges innocently as the speech continues:

Pour le coeur, dont sur tout nous devons faire cas,
On sait, sans vanité, que je n'en manque pas,
Et l'on m'a vu pousser, dans le monde, une affaire
D'une assez vigoureuse et gaillarde manière.
Pour de l'esprit, j'en ai sans doute, et du bon goût
A juger sans étude et raisonner de tout,
A faire aux nouveautés, dont je suis idolâtre,
Figure de savant sur les bancs du théâtre,
Y décider en chef, et faire du fracas
A tous les beaux endroits qui méritent des Has.
Je suis assez adroit; j'ai bon air, bonne mine,
Les dents belles surtout, et la taille fort fine.
Quant à se mettre bien, je crois, sans me flatter,
Qu'on serait mal venu de me le disputer.
Fort aimé du beau sexe, et bien auprès du maître.
Je crois qu'avec cela, mon cher Marquis, je crois
Qu'on peut, par tout pays, être content de soi.

The small, flat words contrast with the solemnity of the performance. When he uses a word like *vigoureuse* the thin, mincing lilt of the line robs it of its power and gives it a grotesque air. When we come to the *juger sans étude* there is a note of fatuity that is heightened by the eulogy of his teeth and his waist which are given the same importance as his skill as a critic. And with a final piroutte he turns to survey the admiring world of his peers. The brittle, artificial style reflects the poverty of experience of all these people.

One of the best demonstrations of the vigour and subtlety of Molière's style ocurs in the great scene between Célimène and Arsinoé which is one of the high lights of the play. Thus Célimène:

> Oui, oui, franche grimace;
> Dans l'âme elle est du monde, et ses soins tentent tout
> Pour accrocher quelqu'un, sans en venir à bout.
> Elle ne saurait voir qu'avec un oeil d'envie
> Les amants déclarés dont une autre est suivie;
> Et son triste mérite, abandonné de tous,
> Contre le siècle aveugle est toujours en courroux.
> Elle tâche à couvrir d'un faux voile de prude
> Ce que chez elle on voit d'affreuse solitude,
> Et, pour sauver l'honneur de ses faibles appas,
> Elle attache du crime au pouvoir qu'ils n'ont pas.
> Cependant un amant plaîrait fort à la dame,
> Et même pour Alceste elle a tendresse d'âme;
> Ce qu'il me rend de soins outrage ses attraits,
> Elle veut que ce soit un vol que je lui fais,
> Et son jaloux dépit, qu'avec peine elle cache,
> En tous endroits, sous main, contre moi se détache.

The more one studies Molière's style, the more one is impressed by its concrete particularity. It renders with remarkable vividness the changing expressions of his characters. The words do an immense amount of work without seeming to do so. They nearly always issue in action and the actions of his characters mirror conflicting feelings. There was nothing absourd or discreditable about the *métier de prude* in the seventeenth century. A prude was simply an austere and rather puritanical woman; it was only later that the word acquired its present-day suggestion of affectation. Molière's prudes, however, are all 'false prudes' and they are used as negative symbols —as symbols of a hypocritical rejection of the life of the senses in which Molière himself so firmly believed. So it is here. *Grimace* sets the tone of this passage and it is sufficient to give us a picture of the stiff, puritanical old maid, trying to hide her lack of success behind a mask; but it is a *franche grimace,* a mask which hides nothing and simply draws attention to her hypocrisy. For in spirit she belongs to the world of Célimène and Acaste, accepts its values and does her best to compete with them. *Accrocher* means to 'hook' or 'angle' for a husband. We see the prude stretching out her hand

furtively, but she misses the mark. She is left looking enviously at the procession of gallants who pass her by without a glance in the train of some other beauty. She is the withered old maid—this is the cruel sense of *triste mérite*—completely abandoned in a world, in an age, in which favours are only too lightly distributed. The *faux voile de prude* reinforces the *franche grimace,* makes it more explicit, more pictorial. It is a veil which she puts between herself and the world, a veil which she uses vainly to cover the *affreuse solitude,* the terrible, consuming sexual frustration of the ageing spinster. But her deception extends further than that. It is used to conceal her intrigues and it is also a weapon which she uses to attack other women who are more successful than she is. The hand which is stretched out to 'hook' a gallant is now stretched out to stab Célimène as a relief to her bitterness. The image of the 'veil' is caught up and developed in the encounter between Célimène and Arsinoé which follows. Célimène is pretending to quote some unfavourable remarks on Arsinoé's deportment which she has heard in some one's drawing-room:

> A quoi bon, disaient-ils, cette mine modeste,
> Et ce sage dehors que dément tout le reste?
> Elle est à bien prier exacte au dernier point;
> Mais elle bat ses gens et ne les paye point;
> Dans tous les lieux dévots elle étale un grand zèle;
> Mais elle met du blanc et veut paraître belle;
> Elle fait des tableaux couvrir les nudités;
> Mais elle a de l'amour pour les réalités.

The procedure is the same as in the earlier passage. We see life going on simultaneously on different sides of a 'veil', the contrast between the public and private life of a false prude. The *mine modeste* is the mask which hides, or is intended to hide, an interior disorder. She is exact in carrying out her religious duties; we see her sink to her knees and rise to her feet in church; but behind the locked doors of her house, the pious gestures merge into the savage rise and fall of the whip as she thrashes her servants. She gives alms, but has no money to pay her servants their just wages. She is the centre of attention at the cenacle where the pious meet, ostentatiously crossing herself; but in the fastness of her boudoir the pious gestures are replaced by the hand painting the face in a vain effort to repair its *triste mérite*. The last two lines are one of the glories of the play. The prude solemnly hangs a veil over some heavy classical painting of nude figures to hide them from a shocked world, but it is another subterfuge, another attempt to hide her own frustration. The *réalités* conveys an extraordinary sense of hot, guilty intimacy and the spiteful Célimène is only too conscious of the bitterness of the shaft.

I have dwelt on these passages not only because of their intrinsic merits, but also because the image of the 'veil' and the 'mask' explains the intention behind the play. It is to an even greater

extent than *Tartuffe* a comedy of unmasking, but the unmasking is a game in which author and characters all take part. Alceste tries to abolish conventional politeness because he feels that it encourages insincerity and prevents him from seeing into the human heart. He attacks his opponent in the lawsuit because he is accepted at his face value and is able to secure an unjust decision:

> Au travers de son *masque* on voit à plein le traître;
> Partout il est connu pour tout ce qu'il peut être,
> Et ses roulements d'yeux et son ton radouci
> N'imposent qu'à des gens qui ne sont point d'ici.

In another place:

> On devrait châtier sans pitié
> Ce commerce honteux de *semblants d'amitié*.

Célimène is busy stripping the mask from Arsinoé and from other members of the circle in order to reveal their hypocrisy and absurdity, but at the end of the encounter with Arsinoé she makes a far more damaging admission than she realizes:

> Madame, on peut, je crois, louer et blâmer tout,
> Et chacun a raison suivant l'âge ou le goût.
> Il est une saison pour la galanterie,
> Il en est une aussi propre à la pruderie.
> On peut, par politique, en prendre le parti,
> Quand de nos jeunes ans l'éclat est amorti:
> Cela sert à couvrir de fâcheuses disgrâces.
> Je ne dis pas qu'un jour je ne suive vos traces:
> L'âge amènera tout, et ce n'est pas le temps,
> Madame, comme on sait, d'être prude à vingt ans.

For here Molière himself takes a hand. The fragile prettiness of the verse reflects the fragile values by which Célimène lives. She accepts them absolutely and uncritically and the future holds out little for her beyond Arsinoé's own fate.

The characters enter wholeheartedly into the game of unmasking which reaches its climax with the reading of Célimène's letter in the last Act; but as with Arsinoé they only do it as a distraction, as a means of 'veiling' their own interior emptiness from themselves.

Now the game is of the utmost seriousness when played by Alceste and Célimène. They are doubtful about their feelings for one another. Alceste *thinks* that he is madly in love with Célimène, but the very violence of his protestations betrays an element of doubt. He is not at all sure that she loves him and he sets to work to find out because it distracts him from his doubts about his own feelings. The play enters on its last phase when Arsinoé undertakes to prove to Alceste that Célimène is not in love with him:

> Oui, toute mon amie, elle est et je la nomme
> Indigne d'asservir le coeur d'un galant homme,
> Et le sien n'a pour vous que de feintes douceurs.

Alceste bridles at this:

> Cela se peut, Madame: on ne voit pas les coeurs ;
> Mais votre charité se serait bien passée
> De jeter dans le mien une telle pensée.

The *on ne voit pas les coeurs* is a defence mechanism: it describes exactly what Alceste wants to know and directs his attention uncomfortably back to his own doubts. The damage is done in spite of his protests:

> Non; mais sur ce sujet, quoi que l'on nous expose,
> Les doutes sont fâcheux plus que toute autre chose;
> Et je voudrais, pour moi, qu'on ne me fît savoir
> Que ce qu'avec clarté l'on peut me faire voir.

Arsinoé gleefully undertakes the job—on condition that he goes home with her:

> Là je vous ferai voir une preuve fidèle
> De l'infidélité du coeur de votre belle;
> Et si pour d'autres yeux le vôtre peut brûler,
> On pourra vous offrir de quoi vous consoler.

She is extremely successful in giving Célimène away, but not in replacing her. In the last two Acts Molière rings the changes so rapidly, the feelings are so complex that one is doubtful whether 'comic', 'moving' or 'horrible' is the proper description of some of the scenes.

'Tout le malheur d'Alceste, de l'Alceste que nous sommes tous', writes M. Mauriac, 'vient de cette exigence d'absolu que nous apportons en amour qui est le sentiment le plus relatif. Alceste écarte avec fureur tous les faux-semblants, il veut avancer en terrain solide dans ce pays du Tendre qui est par essence le domaine du mouvant; et c'est parce qu'il est le domaine du mouvant qu'il est le domaine propre de Célimène'.[10]

Alceste's

> Non; j'ai résolu de n'en pas faire un pas.
> J'ai tort ou j'ai raison.

of which I have already spoken, has its parallel in the story of his love affair. When he remarks

> Plus on aime quelqu'un, moins il faut qu'on le flatte:
> A ne rien pardonner le pur amour éclate.

his *pur amour* is the absolute love described by Mauriac, the absolute necessity of fixing his love in a formula and compelling the loved one to conform to it. It is here that he fails with Célimène. He feels that he is in the *domaine du mouvant*, that the ground is shifting under his feet, threatening to plunge him into chaos at any

[10] *Op. cit.* pp. 151-2.

moment. When he discovers the letter to Oronte, he loses all control over himself; the whole universe rocks:

> . . . le déchaînement de toute la nature
> Ne m'accablerait pas comme cette aventure.

Éliante comes to the rescue with her moderate and reasonable

> Avez-vous, pour le croire, un juste fondement?

recalling the *solide et sincère* and the desperate hunt for a sound foundation of earlier scenes. This produces an extraordinary reaction in Alceste who suddenly see in her a refuge against the devouring doubt. 'You must avenge me, Madame', he cries. 'Avenge you, but how?'

> En recevant mon coeur.
> Acceptez-le, Madame, au lieu de l'infidèle,
> C'est par là que je puis prendre vengeance d'elle.

When we recall that Éliante is Alceste's one chance of salvation, we can appreciate the grimness of Molière's irony here.

It becomes clearer as the play draws towards its conclusion that Célimène is a means to an end, that Alceste's chief preoccupation is deliverance from his strange manias, is a need to achieve a startling success to rehabilitate himself in the eyes of the world and to make him feel that he is rooted in society:

> Ah! rien n'est comparable à mon amour extrême,
> Et, dans l'ardeur qu'il a de se montrer à tous,
> Il va jusqu'à former des souhaits contre vous.
> Oui, je voudrais qu'aucun ne vous trouvât aimable,
> Que le Ciel, en naissant, ne vous eût donné rien,
> Que vous n'eussiez ni rang, ni naissance, ni bien,
> Afin que de mon coeur l'éclatant sacrifice
> Vous pût d'un pareil sort réparer l'injustice,
> Et que j'eusse la joie et la gloire, en ce jour,
> De vous voir tenir tout des mains de mon amour.

This shows to what extent Alceste lives in a private world, how impossible it is to prevent the 'quelque chose en soi de noble et d'héroïque' from being swamped and destroyed by his eccentricities. For he is obliged to invent a situation in which he can repair imaginary injustices by imaginary sacrifices to convince himself not merely of the reality of his own feelings, but of his very existence.

While Alceste is hunting desperately to discover some sure foundation in the *domaine du mouvant*, Célimène is clinging no less tenaciously to her shifting, changing world. For her whole existence depends on maintaining a state of doubt—doubt about her own feelings, doubt in the minds of her retainers about her feelings for them. When Alceste and Oronte deliver their ultimatum—'Choose between us two'—it is she who assumes the role of the trapped animal, or perhaps of the trapped butterfly, struggling desperately to avoid a commitment:

Mon Dieu! que cette instance est là hors de saison,
Et que vous témoignez, tous deux, peu de raison!
Je sais prendre parti sur cette préférence,
Et ce n'est pas mon coeur maintenant qui balance:
Il n'est point suspendu, sans doute, entre vous deux,
Et rien n'est si tôt fait que le choix de nos voeux.
Mais je souffre, à vrai dire, une gêne trop forte
A prononcer en face un aveu de la sorte:
Je trouve que ces mots, qui sont désobligeants,
Ne se doivent point dire en présence des gens;
Qu'un coeur de son penchant donne assez de lumière,
Sans qu'on nous fasse aller jusqu'à rompre en visière;
Et qu'il suffît enfin que de plus doux témoins
Instruisent un amant du malheur de ses soins.

Finally, when she can no longer avoid making a choice, she discovers that she does not love Alceste enough to follow him into his desert and his vanity is too great to allow of any compromise:

La solitude effraye une âme de vingt ans;
Je ne sens point la mienne assez grande, assez forte,
Pour me résoudre à prendre un dessein de la sorte . . .

VI.

I have already spoken of the differences between the *Misanthrope* and Molière's other plays. When the curtain comes down on the *École des femmes, Tartuffe, l'Avare* and *les Femmes savantes,* the audience is left in no doubt about the author's intentions. It is able to 'determine . . exactly what attitude is broken down and what takes its place'. In *Tartuffe* religious mania is satirised, a criminal is brought to book and the play closes with the triumph of society. When the Exempt declares

Nous vivons sous un prince ennemi de la fraude

we cannot doubt that the whole of the play is behind the single line.

The same cannot be said of the *Misanthrope*. Molière has richly fulfilled his intention of speaking 'contre les moeurs du siècle'; but the doubt, which is an integral part of our experience, persists. We are perhaps able to determine what attitude is broken down, but it is less easy to decide what takes its place. It is idle to pretend that order is re-established and that a chastened buffoon is brought back to the norm of sanity. At the close of the play society, in the persons of Célimène and her retainers, leaves the stage by one exit and Alceste abandons society by another. The line that echoes in the mind is not a profession of belief, but a profession of complete disbelief, is not Philinte's

La parfaite raison fuit toute extrémité

but Alceste's

Mais la raison n'est pas ce qui règle l'amour.

Indeed, so far from ending in another triumph for *la parfaite raison* it is *la parfaite raison* which dissolves into Alceste's

Mes sens par la raison ne sont plus gouvernés.

Ramon Fernandez seems to put his finger on the point when, in the course of his stimulating but highly erratic study of Molière, he remarks that Molière lived in an age of intellectual scepticism. For when one considers the play as a whole, it is difficult not to feel that Molière had come to share Alceste's own disbelief in reason. The *honnête homme* no doubt contributes to the poise of each of the plays in which he appears, but his urbane, polished discourses never succeed in converting anyone; and even in *Tartuffe* conversion is brought about by a sudden change of situation—the intervention of the 'great Prince'—and not by Cléante. In the *Misanthrope,* more than in any of the other plays, the *honnête homme* is a symbolical figure and Molière is particularly careful to avoid the appearance of imposing a solution. The most that he does is to suggest that a blending of the virtues of Philinte and Éliante may have some bearing on the complicated situation which has arisen. In no other play does he reveal such variety and complexity of feelings, but in no other does he show such reluctance to judge the individual or such a tendency to call in question all accepted standards and formulas. It is a masterly exploration of the motives behind social behaviour; feelings are tracked down, as surely as in Racine, to the moment of their formation; but judgment on them is suspended. There is in truth no formal ending to the play. The catharsis lies in the clarifying of our feelings, in the perception that social adjustment is a personal matter where in the last resort no facile slogan or philosophical system can help us; and the 'message', if we must have one, is that we must have the courage to create our own 'order', whatever the cost, instead of yielding to the temptation of an easy escape.

MARTIN TURNELL.

[Concluded]

CHAUCER (III):

THE CANTERBURY TALES (II)

IN the 'confession' of the much lesser Pardoner's Prologue the conventionality is more obtrusive as such and has repelled, as the Elizabethan soliloquy sometimes does also, readers incapacitated by modern 'naturalistic' conventions. But even if we cannot rid ourselves of the disturbing irrelevence that the rogue is apparently giving away to the pilgrims the secrets he lives by, we might persuade ourselves that even that might not be outrageously improbable in an excess of exhibitionism. Glorying and confident in his invincible roguery, his tongue loosened with drink, the Pardoner might (even by 'naturalistic' standards) be imagined as carried away enough to boast incautiously as well as impudently.

As he reappears in his Prologue and Tale he is the thoroughly conventionalized figure of the fraudulent preacher who preaches against the sin which he himself typifies, Avarice. The object of his emotional and picturesque sermons against Avarice is to loosen his hearers' purse-strings for his own profit. To this immoral end he is consciously the unctiously declamatory popular orator in the guise of extreme holiness.

> I peyne me to han an hauteyn speche,
> And ringe it out as round as gooth a belle . . .
> I stonde lyk a clerk in my pulpet,
> And whan the lewed peple is doun-y-set,
> I preche, so as ye han herd bifore,
> And telle an hundred false japes more.
> Than peyne I me to stretche forth the nekke,
> And est and west upon the peple I bekke,
> As doth a dowve sitting on a berne.

He will do no honest work; his other profitable roles are those of a pedlar of false relics and a medicine-man selling false remedies and formulas to induce people to feel and believe what they would like to.

But, even if one makes allowances for misreading, the Pardoner's Prologue is a poor thing in comparison with the Wyf's. In this case all the life has gone into the Tale which has the dual character of a popular sermon and moral tale. The tale is such as might have grown, as an illustration, out of a popular sermon on Gluttony and Avarice to show picturesquely Death as the wages of Sin.

> Than telle I hem ensamples many oon
> Of olde stories, longe tyme agoon:
> For lewed peple loven tales olde.

In the case of the Pardoner's Tale, however, the order by which the tale is subsidiary to the rest of the sermon is reversed—the sermon grows out of the tale and is embedded in it. The Pardoner's preaching and entertaining are entangled, perhaps confused in his own mind, and share an identical picturesque life.

The lurid opening startles us into attention by the sensationalism of its orgy of indignant references to various forms and images of riot and lust.

> . . . yonge folk, that 'haunteden folye,
> As ryot, hasard, stewes, and tavernes,
> Wher-as, with harpes, lutes, and giternes,
> They daunce and pleye at dees bothe day and night,
> And ete also and drinken over hir might,
> Thurgh which they doon the devel sacrifyse
> With-in that develes temple, in cursed wyse,
> By superfluitee abhominable;
> Hir othes been so grete and so dampnable,
> That it is grisly for to here hem swere;
> Our blissed lordes body they to-tere;
> Hem thoughte Jewes rente him noght y-nough;
> And right anon than comen tombesteres
> Fetys and smale, and yonge fruytesteres,
> Singers with harpes, baudes, wafereres,
> Whiche been the verray develes officeres
> To kindle and blowe the fyr of lecherye,
> That is annexed un-to glotonye;
> The holy writ take I to my witnesse,
> That luxurie is in wyn and dronkenesse.

There is present a superstitious feeling of shocked and outraged religion:

> . . . they doon the devel sacrifyse
> With-in that develes temple, in cursed wyse . . .

Blasphemy in particular is luridly realized as something unnatural and ghastly:

> Our blissed lordes body they to-tere . . .

Our imagination having been seized by these rather journalistic methods we find ourselves listening first not to a tale but to a sermon on 'glotonye'. This digression, viewed from the detachment of the Chaucerian context, is the Pardoner's exhibition of his powers as a spell-binder, and is at the same time on his part a kind of private indulgence; there is the hint of a horrible gloating luxury in what he condemns with such zest (such as Eliot has remarked lurks involuntarily even in Donne's sermons in contrast with those of Lancelot Andrewes), a sly hint of yielding to the grotesque fascination of the flesh. But in the case of Chaucer the dramatization and also the Pardoner's conscious self-dramatization ensure a double detachment which objectifies it completely as comic art. Digression

was a deliberate device of the rhetoricians and Chaucer gives it dramatic importance as representational of the *persona*.

After a number of 'popular' *exempla* from the Bible in the approved manner the Pardoner dwells on the original instance of 'glotonye'—the eating of the forbidden fruit by Adam and his wife—and this produces a number of indignant or mock-indignant apostrophes and exclamations—'O glotonye . . O glotonye . . .'

> Allas! the shorte throte, the tendre mouth,
> Maketh that, Est and West, and North and South,
> In erthe, in eir, in water men to-swinke
> To gete a glotoun deyntee mete and drinke!

The idea is similar to the Jacobean idea that the fine clothes on a courtier's or lady's back may have cost an estate; whether the criticism belongs more to an awakened social conscience or traditional religious feeling is not easy to determine; perhaps in Chaucer more to the latter, in the Jacobeans to the former.

> O wombe! O bely! O stinking cod,
> Fulfild of donge and of corrupcioun!
> At either ende of thee foul is the soun.
> How greet labour and cost is thee to finde!
> Thise cokes, how they stampe, and streyne, and grinde,
> And turnen substaunce in-to accident,
> To fulfille al thy likerous talent!
> Out of the harde bones knokke they
> The mary, for they caste noght a-wey
> That may go thurgh the golet softe and swote.

The grotesque effect seems to be produced by the virtual personification, and consequent magnification, of the belly and the gullet, as just before of the throat and mouth, and the wasted labour and sweat of the cooks in (unexpected metaphysical phrase) 'turnen substaunce in-to accident'. The vigorous coarseness and the metaphysics seem to come together, momentarily, in the term 'corrupcioun'. There is the same zest and immediacy in the farcical impression of Dronkenesse (included under the head of Glotonye):

> O dronke man, disfigured is thy face,
> Sour is thy breth, foul artow to embrace,
> And thurgh thy dronke nose semeth the soun
> As though thou seydest ay 'Sampsoun, Sampsoun';
> And yet, god wot, Sampsoun drank never no wyn.
> Thou fallest, as it were a stiked swyn . . .
> That whan a man hath dronken draughtes three,
> And weneth that he be at hoom in Chepe,
> He is in Spayne, right at the toune of Lepe,
> Nat at the Rochel, ne at Burdeux toun;
> And thanne wol he seye, 'Sampsoun, Sampsoun'.

Gluttony is visualized as parts of the body that have taken on a

kind of independent life; drunkenness is impersonated by a drunk man.

The resumption of the tale—as lurid as at first—reminds us that the Middle Ages had periodic visitations of pestilence—the Death—which made a profound impact on religious feeling as retribution for sin. The 'ryotoures' are suddenly confronted in the midst of their ferocious lusts by an image of death:

> And as they satte, they herde a belle clinke
> Biforn a cors, was caried to his grave.

Death was a person to the mediaeval mind with its deep-rooted personifying habit, and his victim is correspondingly presented as a sharp visual image:

> . . . an old felawe of youres;
> And sodeynly he was y-slayn to-night;
> For—dronke, *as he sat on his bench up-right*;
> Ther cam a privee theef, men clepeth Deeth,
> That in this contree al the peple sleeth.

In their drunken rage the rioters therefore rush forth to slay Death:

> And we wol sleen this false traytour Deeth;
> He shal be slayn, which that so many sleeth.

They do indeed meet someone who is equally anxious for death, an old man:

> Right as they wolde han troden over a style,
> An old man and a povre with hem mette.
> This olde man ful mekely hem grette,
> And seyde thus, 'now, lordes, god yow see!'
> The proudest of thise ryotoures three
> Answerde agayn, 'what? carl, with sory grace,
> Why artow al forwrapped save thy face?
> Why livestow so longe in so greet age?'
> This olde man gan loke in his visage,
> And seyde thus, 'for I ne can nat finde
> A man, though that I walked in-to Inde,
> Neither in citee nor in no village,
> That wolde chaunge his youthe for myn age;
> And ther-fore moot I han myn age stille,
> As longe time as it is goddes wille.
> Ne deeth, allas! ne wol nat han my lyf;
> Thus walke I, lyk a resteless caityf,
> And on the ground, which is my modres gate,
> I knokke with my staf, bothe erly and late,
> And seye, 'leve moder, leet me in!
> Lo, how I vanish, flesh, and blood, and skin!
> Allas! whan shul my bones been at reste? . . .'

The power of the passage seems to lie in the suggestion that the old man is more (or at least other) than an individual old man; that he

has a non-human force as well as a human. Though it is not said who he is he has the force of the Age (Elde) of the allegories. As Age he is connected with Death, knows about Death and where he is to be found:

> To finde Deethe, turne up this croked way,
> For in that grove I lafte him . . .
> (*cp.* 'croked strete', A B C)

and therefore he knows more, is more powerful for all his apparent frailty and poverty than the proudest of the rioters who foolishly addresses him as an inferior. The mere fact that we are impelled to ask who or what he is—he is 'al forwrapped'—produces the sense that he may be more than he seems. He has been guessed to be Death himself. Since the idea evidently occurs it may be accepted as part of the meaning. But there is no confirmation, though he says he cannot die and has business to go about. When the rioters come to the tree to which he directs them they find not Death but a pot of gold—we are thus brought round again to the theme of Avarice—which is the cause of their discord and several mutually inflicted deaths. The recognition that Death is not after all a person as we have been led to expect, and as mediaeval people were in the habit of imagining, comes as the last shock.

The best of the Tales has generally been assumed to be the *Knightes*. This seems to me unjust to the *Nonne Preestes Tale*. For similar, including perhaps extra-critical reasons, the *Squieres Tale* has (much less deservedly than the *Knightes Tale*)[10] been placed high in conventional esteem. The *Marchantes Tale*, on the other hand, has had, I think, less than enough justice. I propose therefore to devote most of my attention to the *Nonne Preestes Tale* and the *Marchantes Tale* (which I take to be the two best) leaving the more dazzling *Knightes Tale* (with the exception of two passages which I shall specially extract) and the lesser *Squieres Tale* to look after themselves. Even so the rigours of selection—for we can afford

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[10]The superior status of the *Knightes Tale* was confirmed, I suppose, because it fitted in readily enough with the Romantic idea of a mediaeval romance. Yet readers have not failed to notice, and allow for, the presence of a mature tone of amused observation which does not conform to the Romantic pattern. For example, when the young prisoner in the tower catches sight of Emily in the garden—'ther-with-al he bleynte, and cryde 'a!' . . . Again:

> 'Why woldestow be deed', thise wommen crye,
> 'And haddest gold y-nough, and Emelye?'

Here is certainly no romantic poetic diction. On the contrary

> In-to a studie he fil sodeynly,
> As doon thise loveres . . .
> Now up, now doun, as boket in a welle.

This maturity of observation is not cynical—rather it is wisely natural.

to concentrate only on the best—necessitate the omission or, at most, scant consideration of other tales which have in them elements of hardly less interest.

Only a refusal to admit that a tale purporting to be about a cock and a hen could have more than a trivial meaning—though its 'skill' as a 'comic' masterpiece' might be respectfully admired—as light entertainment with perhaps an improving 'moral' attached could have hindered full recognition of the *Nonne Preestes Tale* as a profound philosophical (if that is the right word) and wise poem about human nature.

Against the sober realism of the opening—the description of a peasant widow's poverty—is set the fantastic burlesque and mock heroic brilliance of the description of the cock:

> His vois was merier than the mery orgon
> On messe-dayes that in the chirche gon;
> Wel sikere was his crowing in his logge,
> Than is a clokke, or an abbey orlogge . . .
> His comb was redder than the fyn coral,
> And batailed, as it were a castel-wal.
> His bile was blak, and as the jeet it shoon;
> Lyk asur were his legges, and his toon;
> His nayles whytter than the lilie flour,
> And lyk the burned gold was his colour.

The comparisons (and the colours) lavished incongruously upon a cock produce an impression of inordinate dazzling splendour and gorgeous magnificence as of some proud—perhaps vainglorious—prince of a romance or grand tragedy. This introduces what is to prove the central theme of vanity and pride that goes before a fall. The position of the *Nonne Preestes Tale* immediately after the Monk's monotonous series of solemn *exempla* of 'tragedies':

> Of him that stood in greet prosperitee
> And is y-fallen out of heigh degree:

indicates that it is intended to parody them.

The 'royal' associations, however, become temporarily subordinate to the domestic in the representation of the cock and hen couple—a most natural parody of a human husband and wife. When Pertelote says to Chauntecleer (who is badly shaken by a dream he has had of that beast which we recognize from his description is a fox):

> Now han ye lost myn herte, and al my love;
> I can nat love a coward, by my feith . . .
> Have ye no mannes herte, and han a berd?

they are the very words of a wife. The human conjugal relation is given piquancy by the attribution of a man's heart and beard to—when we remember—a cock. Chauntecleer is an aspect of humanity, the cock-like strutting male aspect; Pertelote the hen-like female aspect.

The cock and hen discussion on dreams brings out a contrast between their attitudes. Pertelote ascribes a purely physiological cause and meaning to dreams (as Pandarus does) and advises a laxative. Her considerable knowledge of mediaeval medicine and of herbs—traditional among the wives—is that of a practical wife. Thereupon the cock—like the Clerk in the *Wyf of Bath's Prologue*—brings to bear his more ponderous, more pretentious male erudition piled up from 'olde bokes'. In the end he rejects the laxatives not after all on any very rational ground but simply because they are disagreeable:

> I hem defye, I love hem never a del

and turns instead to earthly pleasures to distract him, and first to female beauty—which, to the cock, is that of a hen:

> For whan I see the beautee of your face,
> Ye ben so scarlet-reed about your yën,
> It maketh al my drede for to dyen.

But even while his wife's beauty provides him with solace the conceited male continues privately to despise her for her supposed intellectual disabilities, and takes a mean advantage of her ignorance of Latin to quote Latin at her expense; the centuries old male grimace heightens the bookish cock's own absurdity. The passage is, of course, a subtle commentary on the vanity of human learning, and thus reinforces the principal theme.

The coming of day totally dissolves the disagreeableness of the dream:

> . . . he fley doun fro the beem,
> For it was day, and eek his hennes alle.

In bright daylight as he struts before his wives and paramours he is no longer afraid. We are made aware again, as in the initial description, of the royal aspect of Chauntecleer, and he is compared, as to looks, with a lion.

> He loketh as it were a grim leoun;
> And on his toos he romeeth up and doun,
> Him deyned not to sette his foot to grounde.
> He chukketh, whan he hath a corn y-founde,
> And to him rennen thanne his wyves alle.
> Thus royal, as a prince is in his halle . . .

When at length the fatal day arrives he continues a prince about to fall through pride:

> . . . Chauntecleer, in al his pryde,
> His seven wyves walking by his syde,

walking through an earthly—and fool's—paradise:

> Madame Pertelote, my worldes blis,
> Herkneth thise blisful briddes how they singe,

And see the fresshe floures how they springe;
Ful is myn herte of revel and solas.

The poet—or the *persona,* the Nun's Priest—here intervenes with the warning reminder:

But sodeinly him fil a sorweful cas;
For ever the latter ende of joye is wo.
God woot that worldly joye is sone ago.

The fox lurking among the flowers becomes a type of the murderer and, more important, the betrayer; and is identified (in a passage in which the apostrophe exclamatio and exempla of the mediaeval rhetoric is parodied) with the great historical betrayers.

O false mordrer, lurking in thy den!
O newe Scariot, newe Genilon!
False dissimilour, O Greek Sinon,
That broghtest Troye al outrely to sorwe!

This idea of the fox as a tempter, the serpent in Paradise, runs through the succeeding scene; for the poem develops into a serio-comic (one would hardly be justified in calling it burlesque) allegory of the Fall. An allusion to Adam and Eve brings in some of the relevant associations.

Wommannes counseil broghte us first to wo,
And made Adam fro paradys to go,
Ther-as he was ful mery, and wel at ese.

The earthly Paradise vividly recurs with the fox in the role of the serpent among the flowers:

Agayn the sonne; and Chauntecleer so free
Song merier than the mermayde in the see . . .
And so bifel that, as he caste his ye,
Among the wortes, on a boterflye,
He was war of this fox that lay ful lowe.

Then the temptation follows:

He wolde han fled, but that the fox anon
Seyde, 'Gentil sire, allas! where wol ye gon?
Be ye affrayed of me that am your freend?
Now certes, I were worse than a feend,
If I to yow wolde harm or vileinye.
I am nat come your counseil for t'espye;
But trewely, the cause of my cominge
Was only for to herkne how that ye singe.
For trewely ye have as mery a stevene
As eny aungel hath, that is in hevenne;
Therwith ye han in musik more felinge
Than hadde Boëce, or any that can singe.
My lord your fader (god his soule blesse!)

And eek your moder, of hir gentilesse,
Han in myn hous y-been, to my gret ese ;
And certes, sire, ful fayn wolde I yow plese.
But for men speke of singing, I wol seye,
So mote I brouke wel myn eyen tweye,
Save yow, I herde never man so singe,
As dide your fader in the morweninge;
Certes, it was of herte, al that he song.
And for to make his voys the more strong,
He wolde so peyne him, that with bothe his yën
He moste winke, so loude he wolde cryen,
And stonden on his tiptoon ther-with-al,
And stretche forth his nekke long and smal . . .
Now singeth, sire, for seinte Charitee,
Let see, conne ye your fader countrefete?

Chauntecleer is 'ravished with his flaterye'; (The persona here intervenes with an admonition against flatterers:

Allas! ye lordes, many a fals flatour
Is in your courtes, and many a losengeour.)

In this case it is the male who falls through vanity; the original Garden of Eden situation is reversed.

This Chauntecleer stood hye up-on his toos,
Strecching his nekke, and heeld his eyen cloos,
And gan to crowe loude for the nones.

The fantastic creature is caught by the outstretched neck. The moralizing reflections on the event are necessarily mock-serious when that event is a tragic disaster to a cock.

O destinee, that mayst nat been eschewed!
Allas, that Chauntecleer fleigh fro the bemes!
Allas, his wyf ne roghte nat of dremes!
And on a Friday fil al this meschaunce.
O Venus, that art goddesse of plesaunce,
Sin that thy servant was this Chauntecleer,
And in thy service dide al his poweer,
More for delyt, than world to multiplye.

The descent from high philosophical reflection (on the inexorable logic of cause and effect), the shocking consideration that a Friday (Venus day) was the fatal day, and the reference to Chauntecleer as Venus' servant 'more for delyt, than world to multiplye' is rippling surface comic variation. The exclamatory apostrophes to 'destinee' and Venus are succeeded by an apostrophe to Gaufred (a celebrated mediaeval teacher of rhetoric) whose artificial aid is invoked to 'chyde the Friday'. 'Every educated man remembered Master Gaufred', says Professor Manly in *Chaucer and the Rhetoricians*, 'and some perhaps knew by heart his famous lamentation (on the death of Richard Coeur de Lion who received his fatal wound

on a Friday) for the *Nova Poetria* was one of the principal text books on rhetoric . . . studied in the schools'. This passage of *exclamatio* and apostrophe composes, of course, a further Chaucerian parody of the mediaeval rhetoric in which the poet himself was well grounded. The passage rises superbly to a mock-heroic climax—a series of *exempla*—in which the cries of the bereaved hens are compared to the lamentations of famous women on the grand tragic occasions of history.

> Certes, swich cry ne lamentacioun
> Was never of ladies maad, whan Ilioun
> Was wonne, and Pirrus with his streite swerd,
> Whan he hadde hent king Priam by the berd,
> And slayn him (as saith us *Eneydos*),
> As maden alle the hennes in the clos,
> Whan they had seyn of Chauntecleer the sighte.
> But sovereynly dame Pertelote shrighte,
> Ful louder than dide Hasdrubales wyf,
> Whan that hir housbond hadde lost his lyf,
> And that the Romayns hadde brend Cartage;
> She was so ful of torment and of rage,
> That wilfully into the fyr she sterte,
> And brende hir-selven with a stedfast herte.
> O woful hennes, right so cryden ye,
> As, whan that Nero brende the citee
> Of Rome, cryden senatoures wyves,
> For that hir housbondes losten alle hir lyves.

This, in its turn, leads up to a final grand climax in external action (as in the *Wyf of Bath's Prologue*)—a burlesque of the moral disorder, the universal chaos of the Fall in terms of a commotion in an English farmyard.

> Ran Colle our dogge, and Talbot, and Gerland,
> And Malkin, with a distaf in hir hand;
> Ran cow and calf and eek the verray hogges
> So were they fered for herking of the dogges
> And shouting of the men and wimmen eke,
> They ronne so, hem thoughte hir herte breke.
> They yelleden as feendes doon in helle;
> The dokes cryden as men wolde hem quelle;
> The gees for fere flowen over the trees;
> Out of the hyve cam the swarm of bees;
> So hideous was the noyse, a! benedicite! . . .
> It seemed as that heven sholde falle.

This comic chaos is given a contemporary reference by the allusion to Jack Straw and to the disorder with which Chaucer's social world had been threatened. When the poet remarks 'My tale is of a cok', that is a conscious modesty; a serio-comic allegory of the Fall, it is fundamentally serious—a portrayal of the central moral truths of human nature.

The *Marchantes Tale* is a study of the human capacity for deluding itself as typified by Januarie's fantasies; these are exhibited in a clear Chaucerian daylight of disenchanted recognition. Having for sixty years

> . . . folwed ay his bodily delyt . . .

Januarie nourishes outrageous delusions about marriage as a blissful way of escape from the consequences of a life misspent.

> 'For wedlock is so esy and so clene,
> That in this world it is a paradys'.
> Thus seyde this olde knight, that was so wys.

The Tale has no sooner begun on this note than—Januarie's delusions being connected with marriage—there is a digression in commendation of marriage the complete seriousness of which is, however, as suspect as that of the Pardoner's equivalent digression in denunciation of gluttony—especially if it is remembered that the Merchant, who is here the persona, has just complained in his prologue how different his wife unfortunately is from the patient Griselda of the preceding tale. The Merchant's digression, and indeed much of his tale as a whole, continues the debate on marriage initiated by the Wyf of Bath, and to which the Clerk in his 'envoy' explicitly relates his tale of Griselda. The praise of having a wife, serious though it evidently is in its general substance, is rendered equivocal by one or two insertions in an opposite sense:

> And yet somme clerkes seyn, it nis nat so.

Theofraste, for one—though we are urged to 'deffye Theofraste and herke me'. Again, whereas 'alle yiftes of fortune':

> . . . passen as a shadwe upon a wal . . .
> A wyf wol laste, and in thyn hous endure,
> Wel lenger than thee list, paraventure.

The idealism tends to become more apparently unreal also by its own growing exaggeration.

> She seith not ones 'nay', when he seith 'ye'.
> 'Do this', seith he; 'al redy, sir', seith she.

Every man

> Up-on his bare knees oghte al his lyf
> Thanken his god that him hath sent a wyf.

The digression moves very consciously between reality and unreality, solidity and air.

Januarie's belated decision to marry has a false basis, as we are again reminded on the resumption of the tale; he irresponsibly fancies marriage to be an easy absolution for the errors of a lifetime.

> Up-on my soule somwhat moste I thinke . . .
> I have my body folily despended;
> Blessed be god, that it shal been amended!

Once possessed with the idea of marriage, he is in ungovernable haste; having waited all his life, he cannot wait a day longer. But he is as unaware of himself and his qualifications for marriage as he is later unable to recognize in his young wife another person. His reason for preferring a young maid to an old widow is that the former, he supposes, would be more easily imposed upon—she would, he thinks, be as wax in his hands—and, further, she would be more suitable for his purposes of procreation.

At this point allegory asserts itself with the entrance of the true and false counsellors, Placebo and Justinus, like the Good and Bad Angels in *Doctor Faustus*. They belong—as the names indicate—to the same world as the personifications of the allegories and moralities. They are spoken of as brothers, but in their contention for their brother's soul they are felt as projections of contrary aspects of the same mind corresponding in their turn perhaps to contending supernatural powers. Placebo who says

> I hold your owene conseil is the beste

is, further, a type belonging to satiric observation of persons and having as such an objective validity.

> I have now been a court-man al my lyf.
> And god it wot, though I unworthy be,
> I have stonden in ful greet degree
> Abouten lordes of ful heigh estaat;
> Yet hadde I never with noon of hem debaat.
> I never hem contraried, trewely;
> I woot wel that my lord can more than I.
> What that he seith, I holde it ferme and stable;
> I seye the same, or elles thing semblable.
> A ful greet fool is any conseillour,
> That serveth any lord of heigh honour,
> That dar presume, or elles thenken it,
> That his conseil sholde passe his lordes wit.

The process of Januarie's self-illusionment ('fantasye') is portrayed with characteristic clarity of knowledge and execution.

> Heigh fantasye and curious bisinesse
> Fro day to day gan in the soule impresse
> Of Januarie aboute his mariage.
> Many fair shap, and many a fair visage
> Ther passeth thurgh his herte, night by night.
> As who-so toke a mirour polished bright,
> And settle it in a commune market-place.

The process continues unchecked, the fantasy wantonly augmented, away from any objective relation to the object of his eventual choice.

> For love is blind al day, and may nat see.
> And whan that he was in his bed y-broght,
> He purtreyed, in his herte and in his thoght,

Hir fresshe beautee and hir age tendre,
Hir myddel smal, hir armes longe and sclendre,
Hir wyse governaunce, hir gentillesse,
Hir wommanly beringe and hir sadness.
And whan that he on hir was condescended,
Him thoghte his chois mighte nat ben amended.
For whan that he him-self concluded hadde,
Him thoghte ech other mannes wit so badde
That impossible it were to replye
Agayn his chois, this was his fantasye.

This ends in a grossly fantastic exaggeration of the moral confusion in which (as we have seen) it all originated.

Suffyseth him hir youthe and hir beautee,
Which mayde, he seyde, he wolde han to his wyf,
To lede in ese and holinesse his lyf.

It is essentially the same moral confusion ('to lede in *ese* and *holinesse* his lyf') the recognition of which underlies so much of the ironical 'comedy' both of *Troilus and Criseyde* and the *Canterbury Tales*. Even Januarie has misgivings as to whether he can enjoy both—both the earthly paradise, which is what he fancies marriage to be, and the heavenly beatitude which he grossly thinks of in terms of enjoyment. The irony is that he should be so deluded as to fancy it possible he might.

'I have', quod he, 'herd seyd, ful yore ago,
Ther may no man han parfite blisses two,
This is to seye, in erthe and eek in hevene.
For though he kepe him fro the sinnes sevene,
And eek from every branche of thilke tree,
Yet is ther so parfit felicitee,
And so greet ese and lust in mariage,
That ever I am agast, now in myn age,
That I shal lede now so mery a lyf,
So delicat, with-outen wo and stryf,
That I shal have myn hevene in erthe here.
For sith that verray hevene is boght so dere,
With tribulacioun and greet penaunce,
How sholde I thanne, that live in swich plesaunce
As alle wedded men don with hir wyves,
Come to the blisse ther Crist eterne on lyve is?

Confronted by this, the ecstasy of human delusion, Justinus—'which that hated this folye'—can oly hope that Januarie's marital transaction may be so unfortunate as to undelude him and deliver his soul:

Dispeire yow noght, but have in your memorie,
Paraunter she may be your purgatorie!

The wedding-feast—'whan tendre youthe hath wedded stouping age'—takes on both an allegorical and a mythological meaning. We

remember the seasonal significance of the names Januarie and May. The introduction of Bacchus and Venus—following on allusions to Italy and to Greek and Biblical legends—extends the description beyond mere realism.

> Bacus the wyn hem skinketh al aboute,
> And Venus laugheth up-on every wight.
> For Januarie was bicome hir knight.

This fantastic-comic note of mocking jollity—Januarie as Venus' knight—in the masque-like spectacle is enhanced by the mischievous mirth of Venus herself indecorously (considering she is a goddess among mortals) performing a dance. Januarie sitting beside May (who is described as 'fulfild of alle beautee and plesaunce') on the elevation of a dais is a fantastically deluded figure, both self-knowledge and power of objective realization drowned in kindled erotic reveries.

> This Januarie is ravisshed in a traunce
> At every time he loked on hir face;
> But in his herte he gan hir to manace,
> That he that night in armes wolde hir streyne
> Harder than ever Paris did Eleyne.
> But natheless, yet hadde he greet pitee
> That thilke night of offenden hir moste he;
> And thoughte, 'allas! O tendre creature!
> Now wolde god ye mighte wel endure
> Al my corage, it is so sharp and kene;
> I am agast ye shul it nat sustene.
> But god forbede that I dide al my might!
> Now wolde god that it were woxen night,
> And that the night wolde lasten evermo.
> I wolde that al this peple were ago'.

The juxtaposition of Youthe and Elde in one bridal bed, the visualisation of their close contact, is a grotesque horror.

> And Januarie hath faste in armes take
> His fresshe May, his paradys, his make.
> He lulleth hir, he kisseth hir ful ofte
> With thikke bristles of his berd unsofte,
> Lyk to the skin of houndfish, sharp as brere,
> For he was shave al newe in his manere.
> He rubbeth hir aboute hir tendre face . . .
> 'For in our actes we mowe do no sinne.
> A man may do no sinne with his wyf!' . . .
> And than he taketh a sop in fyn claree,
> And upright in his bed than sitteth he,
> And after that he sang ful loude and clere,
> And kiste his wyf, and made wantoun chere,
> He was al coltish, ful of ragerye,
> And ful of jargon as a flekked pye.
> The slakke skin aboute his nekke shaketh,

Whyl that he sang; so chaunteth he and craketh,
But god wot what that May thoughte in hir herte,
Whan she him saugh up sittinge in his sherte,
In his night-cappe, and with his nekke lene;
She preyseth nat his peyling worth a bene.
Than seyde he thus, 'my reste wol I take ;
Now day is come, I may no lenger wake'.
And doun he leyde his heed, and sleep til pryme.

Even in bed with his opposite he is as unaware of himself—unaware of the impression he produces—as complacently illusioned as ever, and, in his persisting conception of marriage as licenced sin, as morally confused. The uprush of youthful impulsive joy in Januarie himself contrasts grotesquely with his aged repulsive appearance. The shocking realism of the visualization—corresponding to the realism of that of the Elde of the allegories—has at the same time the vigour, the raciness of the peasant world of the Miller's and the other *fabliau* tales.

He was al coltish, ful of ragerye,
And ful of jargon as a flekked pye.[11]

The physical blindness which overtakes Januarie in the midst of 'his lust and his prosperitee' evidently corresponds to his moral blindness and at the same time lays him still more pathetically open to deception. His elaborately made garden of indolent delight—described in terms of the garden of the Rose and the other allegorical and mythological gardens and paradises—into which he innocently calls his wife in the ecstatic phrases of the song of Solomon, is brutally desecrated by an obscene episode:

Lo heer he sit, the lechour, in the tree.

The *Chanouns Yemannes Tale* is another study of the baneful strength of a delusion—this time that connected with alchemy—and a drastically forshortened account of it may supplement that of the Marchantes Tale. The Canon and his Yeoman are both, as a preliminary, presented with Chaucerian distinctiveness in the *Chanouns Yemannes Prologue.*

'Why artow so discoloured of thy face?' . . .
I am so used in the fyr to blowe.

Even the Yeoman, the failure of whose avaricious calculations leads to his dissatisfaction with his deluded master, testifies to the persistent strength of the delusion.

Yet is it fals, but ay we han good hope
It for to doon, and after it we grope.

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[11]Compare the Wyf of Bath in her Prologue:

And I was yong and ful of ragerye,
Stiborn and strong, and joly as a pye.

But that science is so fer us biforn,
We mowen nat, al-though we hadde it sworn,
It overtake, it slit away so faste;
It wol us maken beggers atte laste.

In this case it is the undeceived Yeoman who is the vulgarer, grosser person. The morbidly mistrustful Canon who overhears his Yeoman's preliminary 'confessions' and rides off overcome with guilty shame, abandoning his disloyal servant, is yet elevated by the uncalculating fanaticism of his delusion beyond the sinister sordid Villonesque environment the delusion reduces him to.

'Wher dwellen ye, if it to telle be?'
'In the suburbes of a toun,' quod he,
'Lurkinge in hernes and in lanes blinds,
Wher-as thise robbours and thise theves by kinde
Holden hir privee fereful residence,
As they that dar nat shewen hir presence'.

The serpentine deceptiveness of the 'science'—which is almost a person—its uncanny elusiveness such words as 'slyding' and 'elvish' are present to suggest.

That slyding science hath me maad so bare .
Our elvish craft, we semen wonder wyse,
Our termes been so clergial and so queynte.

'*Semen* wonder wyse' implies 'but are not wise'.

The principal effects of the Tale—which is the Yeoman's 'confession'—answer to an account similar to L. C. Knights's of some of the characteristic effects of Ben Jonson's *Alchemist*. The successive pilings-up of chemical and other technical terminology is like the blowing-up of a self-important exaggerated balloon to the point at which it bursts from over-inflation.

The pot to-breketh, and farewel! al is go!

The first accumulation bursts in a common sense recognition of the labour and substance wasted:

For lost is al our labour and travayle,
And al the cost, a twenty devel weye.

But the misguided effort, represented by a renewed piling-up of scientific terminology, begins afresh. It reveals itself as a scholastic specialization uncontrolled by general intelligence.

Though he sitte at his book bothe day and night,
In lernyng of this elvish nyce lore,
Al is in veyn, and parde, mochel more!
To lerne a lewed man this subtiltee . . .

Though connected with the illusory prospect of ultimate riches, the obsession grows into an unworldly frenzy:

. . . for nadde thy but a shete
Which that they mighte wrappe hem inne a-night,
And a bak to walken inne by day-light,
They wolde hem selle and spenden on this craft;
They can nat stinte til no-thing be laft

—itself, as reproduced in the derisive folk imagination (here the Yeoman's) farcically distorted.

And evermore, wher that ever they goon,
Men may hem knowe by smel of brim-stoon;
For al the world, they stinken as a goot.

The explosion that shatters the experiment is more than an explosion of chemicals; it is an explosion of illusory hopes and pretensions and of the evil passions lurking around and beneath these.

The pot to-breketh, and farewel! al is go!
Thise metals been of so greet violence,
They percen so, and thurgh the wal they goon,
And somme of hem sinken in-to the ground -
Thus han we lost by tymes many a pound -
And somme are scatered al the floor aboute,
Somme lepe in-to the roof; with-outen doute,
Though that the feend noght in our sighte him shewe,
I trowe he with us be, that ilke shrewe! . . .
Som seyde, it was long on the fyr-making,
Som seyde, nay! it was on the blowing;
(Than was I fered, for that was myn office);
'Straw!' quod the thridde, 'ye been lewed and nyce,
It was nat tempred as it oghte be'.
'Nay!' quod the ferthe, 'stint, and herkne me; . . .'
I can nat telle wher-on it was long,
But wel I wot greet stryf is us among.

As with the harlequinade at the end of the *Nonne Preestes Tale* the externalized confusion corresponds to an original moral confusion.

This rational view-point of Chaucer's mind and art may be further seen in a justly celebrated passage in the *Frankeleyns Tale* (another of the best tales, and the one which concludes the debate on marriage with a supremely wise digression:

Whan maistrie comth, the god of love anon
Beteth hise winges, and farewel! he is gon!

and with three acts of 'curteisye'). Dorigen, unable to drive away 'hir derke fantasye' and overcome by the sight of the black rocks along the shore is described, to begin with, in terms of Ariadne forsaken, the distraught figure on the beach. The passage goes on:

Another tyme ther wolde she sitte and thinke,
And caste hir eyen dounward fro the brinke.

But whan she saugh the grisly rokkes blake,
For verray fere so wolde hir herte quake,
That on hir feet she mighte hir noght sustene.
Than wolde she sitte adoun upon the grene,
And pitously in-to the see biholde,
And seyn right thus, with sorweful sykes colde:
'Eterne god, that thurgh thy purveyaunce
Ledest the world by certein governaunce,
In ydel, as men seyn, ye no-thing make;
But, lord, thise grisly feendly rokkes blake,
That semen rather a foul confusioun
Of werk than any fair creacioun
Of swich a parfit wys god and a stable,
Why han ye wroght this werk unresonable?
For by this werk, south, north, ne west, ne eest,
Ther nis y-fostred man, ne brid, ne beest;
It dooth no good, to my wit, but anoyeth.
See ye nat, lord, how mankinde it destroyeth?
An hundred thousand bodies of mankinde
Han rokkes slayn, al be they nat in minde,
Which mankinde is so fair part of they werk
That thou it madest lyk to thyn owene merk.
Than semed it ye hadde a greet chiertee
Toward mankinde; but how than may it be
That ye swiche menes make it to destroyen,
Whiche menes do no good, but ever anoyen?
I woot wel clerkes wol seyn, as hem leste,
By arguments, that al is for the beste,
Though I ne can the causes nat y-knowe.
But thilke god, that made wind to blowe,
As kepe my lord! this my conclusioun;
To clerkes lete I al disputisoun;
But wolde god that alle thise rokkes blake
Were sonken in-to helle for his sake!
Thise rokkes sleen myn herte for the fere'.

The passage is, in the first instance, a sympathetic study of a neurotic condition, the overwrought heart of the woman too long vainly expectant of her husband's return from dreaded perils. But, it is the *irrationality* of the rocks as they appear to her, that becomes —characteristically of Chaucer—what is most disturbing. They are a 'foul confusioun', a 'werk unresonable' for which the arguments of clerks afford her no explanation. The anguished cry of the distracted woman is merged in that of the outraged reason. The accumulated rhythmical emphasis falls on 'helle'; the black rocks seem an emanation from hell. The magic which the infatuated Aurelius has recourse to causes the rocks to *seem*—only for a week or two—to disappear. But evil cannot be cast out by evil. The black rocks are perhaps preferable as a fact to the involvements of the illusion of their absence. Chaucer's attitude to magic, as to

alchemy, evidently corresponds to his attitude to dreams and fantasies in general.

> For holy chirches feith in our bileve
> Ne suffreth noon illusioun us to greve.

The allegorizing habit does not blunt but rather sharpens the rational mind—which is here the religious mind—by insisting on the distinction between appearance and reality.

The Janus which suddenly invigorates the otherwise conventional description of winter in the same tale:

> And this was, as the bokes me remembre,
> The colde frosty seson of Decembre.
> Phebus wex old, and hewed lyk latoun,
> That in his hote declinacioun
> Shoon as the burned gold with stremes brighte;
> But now in Capricorn adoun he lighte,
> Wher-as he shoon ful pale, I dar wel seyn.
> The bittre frostes, with the sleet and reyn,
> Destroyed hath the grene in every yerd.
> Janus sit by the fyr, with double berd,
> And drinketh of his bugle-horn the wyn.
> Biforn him stant braun of the tusked swyn,
> And 'Nowel' cryeth every lusty man.

is evidently both a mythological figure and a contemporary English yeoman by a Yule fire; his strength and meaning are from both worlds. In this he may be taken as characteristic of Chaucer's figures, though the relative proportion in them of allegory and of direct realistic observation varies. The power of seeing things is of course common both to allegory and to direct—or less directed—observation; and Chaucer's training in the former rendered him not less but more competent in the latter. It is unlikely that the Cook's shop would have been so sharp in realization without this training:

> For many a pastee hastow laten blood,
> And many a Jakke of Dover hastow sold
> That hath been twyes hoot and twyes cold . . .
> For in thy shoppe is many a flye loos.

The grasp of the significant detail could not be more sure—as it is again (a second well-known example) in the description of the Friar's entrance in the *Somnour's Tale*:

> And fro the bench he droof awey the cat.

In Chaucer, as in Dante, similes are almost as characteristic as metaphors in Shakespeare. Eliot remarks that they are functional in allegory. But even Chaucer's most un-allegorical realism—as the portrayal of Alisoun in the *Miller's Tale*—is just as much a matter of similes. Chaucer's method does not change in this respect even when he sets aside allegory. The similes of the Alisoun 'character' differ from those of the personifications only in having more vigour

and immediacy than usual as being nearer to popular speech than to books. Alisoun's extraordinary peasant vitality is largely that of these similes. The 'character' begins with the familiar Youthe and Elde contrast:

> Jalous he was, and heeld hir narwe in cage,
> For she was wilde and yong, and he was old

and goes on:

> Fair was this yonge wyf, and ther-with-al
> As any wesele hir body gent and smal.
> A ceynt she werede barred al of silk,
> A barmclooth eek as whyt as morne milk
> Up-on hir lendes, ful of many a gore.
> Whyt was hir smok and brouded al bifore
> And eek bihinde, on hir coler aboute,
> Of col-blak silk, with-inne and eek with-oute.
> The tapes of hir whyte voluper
> Were of the same suyte of hir coler;
> Hir filet brood of silk, and set ful hye:
> And sikkerly she hadde a likerous yë.
> Ful smale y-pulled were hir browes two,
> And tho were bent, and blake as any sloo.
> She was ful more blisful on to see
> Than is the newe pere-jonette tree;
> And softer than the wolle is of a wether.
> And by hir girdel heeng a purs of lether
> Tasseld with silk, and perled with latoun.
> In al this world, to seken up and doun,
> There nis no man so wys, that coude thenche
> So gay a poelote, or swich a wenche.
> Ful brighter was the shyning of hir hewe
> Than in the tour the noble y-forged newe.
> But of hir song, it was as loude and yerne
> As any swawe sittinge on a berne.
> Ther-to she coude skippe and make game,
> As any kide or calf folwinge his dame,
> Hir mouth was swete as bragot or the meeth,
> Or hord of apples leyd in hey or heeth.
> Winsinge she was, as is a joly colt,
> Long as a mast, and upright as a bolt.
> A brooch she baar up-on hir lowe coler,
> As brood as is the bos of a bocler.
> Hir shoes were laced on hir legges hye;
> She was a prymerole, a pigges-nye
> For any lord to leggen in his bedde,
> Or yet for any good yeman to wedde.

The similes make her immediately *perceptible*, and, simultaneously, convey the essentials of her nature. Comparisons with wild and young creatures (weasel, swallow, kid, calf, colt) convey, in addition

to their specific references, a general impression of wild young life; other comparisons ('newe pere-jonette tree', apples in hay, honey and ale, meed) convey, again in addition to their primary references, a flavour of freshness and sweetness to taste and smell; others (morning milk, a swallow sitting on a barn) supply, again secondarily, further farm-yard associations to the image of a girl essentially rustic though decked in finery of silks and though a town carpenter's wife; others (mast, bolt, brooch as broad as 'bos of a bocler') convey her native strength, uprightness of carriage—in her combined with suppleness—and even a barbaric aspect, all contrasting with her agreeable softness ('softe than the wolle is of a wether'). Many of the comparisons—'the noble y-forged newe', for example—are primarily visualatory; but something further is conveyed, the essential nature of the girl, through the comparisons. They lead to the recognition that her possibilities are those of nature, as yet untamed.

Absolon, the gay dandy of the same tale, is scarcely less vivid, and by the same observational method, though he is nearer to the personifications—the Youthe and the Mirthe—of the allegories. The simile of the fan—in addition to its primary visualatory function—early introduces the note of foppishness.

> Crul was his heer, and as the gold it shoon,
> And strouted as a fanne large and brode;
> Ful streight and even lay his joly shode.
> His rode was reed, his eyen greye as goos;
> With Powles window corven on his shoos,
> In hoses rede he wente fetisly . . .
> In twenty manere coude he trippe and daunce
> After the scole of Oxenforde tho,
> And with his legges casten to and fro . . .
> . . . on the haliday
> Sensinge the wyves of the parish faste;
> And many a lovely look on hem he caste,
> And namely on this carpenteres wyf . . .
> I dar wel seyn, if she had been a mous,
> And he a cat, he wolde hir hente anon.

'Powles window corven on his shoos' is an image of very much the same order of effect as (in the Prologue 'character' of the yong Squyer):

> Embrouded was he, as it were a mede
> Al ful of fresshe floures, whyte and rede.

Absolon's relation to other Chaucerian 'characters' will be obvious. The same phrases are employed again and again in Chaucer to compose the most diverse 'characters'.

Perkin Revelour, the apprentice of the Cook's Fragment, is—as the name Revelour suggests he might be—nearer still to the personifications. The realistic observation—Chaucer has evidently observed the London apprentices—is guided, and enriched, by the

traditional figures and images with which his mind was stored and with which as an artist he was practised.

> Gaillard he was as goldfinch in the shawe,
> Broun as a berie, a propre short felawe . . .
> He was as ful of love and paramour
> As is the hyve ful of hony swete . . .
> At every brydale wolde he songe and hoppe,
> He loved bet the tavern than the shoppe . . .

The similes and other images which vivify the figure (the goldfinch in the shaw, the hive full of honey, hopping, leaping, singing, playing) have all been used before and yet one does not feel they have. An instructive exercise might be to note in any one of the best, and most original, of the Tales how many phrases, and of course whole situations, have been used by Chaucer before. The superiority is one of organization and sharpness of definition.

The Temple of Mars and the Saturn passages in the *Knightes Tale* are as much a matter of 'vision'—on their smaller scale—as the *Divine Comedy* itself. 'All the images are distinct, and even vividly distinct, but there is a total impression of infinity'. What Coleridge is here saying of one of Dante's cantos might equally well be said of the succession of visualizations which composes the Temple of Mars passage, and of their cumulative effect. In contradistinction to the involved hyperbolical magnificence of the Elizabethan rhetoric the Chaucerian consists of a series of *exempla* of violence, treachery and death—each distinct image, shocking in effect by itself, contributing to the ultimate effect of the whole series, the gathered vision of universal violence which leaves the mind shaken and appalled. The fact that the passage happens to be a translation from Boccaccio does not make it the less Chaucerian.

> Ther saugh I first the derke imagining
> Of felonye, and al the compassing;
> The cruel ire, reed as any glede;
> The pykepurs, and eek the pale drede;
> The smyler with the knyf under the cloke;
> The shepne brenning with the blake smoke;
> The treson of the mordring in the bedde;
> The open werre, with woundes al bibledde;
> Contek, with blody knyf and sharp manace;
> Al ful of chirking was that sory place.
> The sleere of him-self yet saugh I ther,
> His herte-blood hath bathed al his heer;
> The nayl y-driven in the shode a-night;
> The colde deeth, with mouth gaping up-right . . .

It is a series of wall-paintings which are supposedly being described. But the images are so immediate that it would be hard to keep that in mind. We are, to begin with, only *told* that he *saw* 'the derke imagining of felonye' but other abstract states, anger and fear, are then brought directly to our vision; and the particular instances of

the series that thus originates are each preternaturally sharp and immediate. Domestic instances multiply still further the horror.

> The sowe freten the child right in the cradel;
> The cook y-scalded, for al his longe ladel.

The effective presence of such domestic images is a measure of Chaucerian freedom from solemn and pretentious pomposity. Dr. Johnson's 18th century comments on 'peep through the blanket of the dark' come to mind, for the Chaucerian freedom, in this respect at least, is comparable to the Shakespearean.

The Saturn passage is again sharp visualization and personification, but Saturn speaks and so correspondingly there are rhetorical repetitions.

> Myn is the drenching in the see so wan,
> Myn is the prison in the derke cote;
> Myn is the strangling and hanging by the throte;
> The murmure, and the cherles rebelling,
> The groyning, and the pryvee empoysoning . . .
> Myn is the ruine of the hye halles,
> The failing of the toures and of the walles
> Up-on the mynour or the carpenter.
> I slow Sampsoun in shaking the piler;
> And myne be the maladyes colde,
> The derke tresons, and the castes olde;
> My loking is the fader of pestilence.

The lines about the ruin of the high halls and falling towers and walls might be from any mediaeval Mutability poem, but the addition of 'up-on the mynour or the carpenter', and perhaps the final personification, gives the passage that particular force which we recognize as identical with that of the Temple of Mars.

As a supplement to the study of Dante (see Mr. Leavis' *Sketch for an English School, Scrutiny* Vol. IX, No. 2), that of Chaucer offers, for those whose original language is English, a uniquely detached standpoint in English for the contemplation of themselves and their modern world. In this respect Chaucer stands with Dante in contradistinction to modern English poets. He is the English poet of a civilization which in Italy was Dante's—a civilization as many think, superior but in any case (that is partly its value) different from our own—its very odd offspring and successor—and as we seem to view it in Dante or Chaucer unusually distinct and complete. Evidently it is the contemplation, serene and free from exaggeration of any kind, which has this distinctness and completeness; for what is contemplated is often recognized as morally repulsive and ugly. The civilization is in the quality of the contemplation rather than in the character of what is contemplated. The allegorical method of contemplation undoubtedly promoted this exceptional clarity and intelligibility of the Chaucerian poetic world.

JOHN SPEIRS.

[Concluded]

COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

'LITTLE GIDDING'.

Bro. George Every, S.S.M., writes *à propos* of *Reflections* on *Objections to a Review of 'Little Gidding'* in the last issue of *Scrutiny*: 'I think you might have pointed out that "a king at nightfall" comes twice in the poem. "If you came at night like a broken king". Do you know that he did come to Gidding, only a night or two before he surrendered to the Scottish army before Newark? Mr. Higinbotham's reference to chess is wiser than he knows, for it was the end of the war, and he was checked on every side, but not finally mate. Years ago, I tried to picture this scene as the centre of the seventeenth-century dilemma, in a little play called *Stalemate* . . . That is why I noticed the two references to it, which do indeed serve to bind the wider aspects of the poem to the local centre, where

> On a winter's afternoon, in a secluded chapel
> History is now and England'.

Another correspondent (M. Jarrett-Kerr, C.R.), corroborating, quotes Carter's *Life of Nicholas Ferrar*: 'In his desolation, the remembrance of the religious house in which he had spent some peaceful hours on the eve of the war recurred to his mind. Very privately, in the darkness of night, he came once more to Gidding'.

I am glad to be confirmed in this way, and must thank my informants. It was from the poem itself that I had gathered the fact, of which I knew nothing from any other source. I state this by way of making a relevant critical point.—F.R.L.

DR. P. G. WODEHOUSE.

'To the best of my recollection the degree which Mr. P. G. Wodehouse received in June 1939 (?) from the University of Oxford, and to which your correspondent referred in the last number of *Scrutiny* (Vol. XI, No. 4), was not a D.C.L. but a D.Litt. I agree that it doesn't make it any better'.—T. J. Cadoux.

CORRECTION.

L. C. Knights, in his article in the last number of *Scrutiny* (p. 283), intending a reference to K. E. Barlow's *The Discipline of Peace*, gave the title by inadvertence as *The Conditions of Peace*. This, of course, belongs to Professor E. H. Carr's recent book.

'EDUCATION AND THE UNIVERSITY'.

As usual where books by members of the Editorial Board are concerned we confine ourselves to announcing the appearance of the above, by F. R. Leavis. See front inside cover of this issue.

THE MODERN UNIVERSITIES

REDBRICK UNIVERSITY, by Bruce Truscot (*Faber*, 10/6).

This is not the book that, reading the advertisements and the first reviews, one hoped it might be. Mr. Truscot is genuinely concerned for education, he knows both the older and the newer universities from the inside, and his book is informative and stimulating. But anyone actively engaged with the problems of a humane or liberal education in a modern university is likely to finish a careful reading with a sense of opportunities missed.

To take the positive account first. An important feature of *Redbrick University* is that it does draw attention once more to the major disadvantages common to most of the modern universities as compared with Oxford and Cambridge. Whereas these offer not merely instruction and vocational training but a 'university life', 'Redbrick' closes down at five o'clock each day when the students disperse, some to hostels, but the majority to their homes where the evening's work must be done, often in company with the family—and the wireless. If the university is in a large industrial city the teachers also disperse, either to the suburbs or, if they can afford the time and money for travelling, into the country. Redbrick, therefore, as Mr. Truscot demonstrates, can only reach a rudimentary stage of development as a society. Informal contacts are difficult and severely limited by circumstances: the 'direct contact between the Head of each School and every undergraduate studying in it' (which rather surprisingly Mr. Truscot finds a characteristic of Redbrick) tends to be at best an official contact of the teacher-pupil kind. The result of all this, combined with the economic pressure from which few students are free, is that the student comes to regard the university as a place where he is trained for a particular job. It is also a place where he can make and meet friends and, in odd afternoons or during the lunch hour, attend meetings; but there is little time or opportunity to break down the invisible walls that separate students with different bents. And so the university becomes, predominantly, a teaching and examining institution. Because there is not enough money to employ sufficient teachers there is only a rudimentary tutorial system, and there are far too many lectures, in all of which notebooks are industriously filled. And because it is impossible to gauge a student's progress simply by noting his attendance at lectures he must be periodically tested in written examinations. The complicated system of vicious circles thus set up—the student's turn up, learn up, cough up, is only one of them—will take some breaking.

These aspects of Redbrick can hardly be brought home too often to those whom they concern. Mr. Truscot describes them clearly (endorsing in effect the case presented in these pages a few years ago[1]), though some distinction should have been made be-

[1]See 'The Modern Universities' by the present writer, in *Scrutiny* for March, 1938, and a Postscript to the article in June, 1938.

tween the universities of the big industrial towns and those where conditions have allowed the development of a nucleus of university life. But, with 'reconstruction' looming, it is to the positive proposals that one turns with most interest. With many of these, too, one readily agrees. More money should be available, especially for the provision of more teachers. There should be more directed reading and fewer lectures; cover-the-ground lectures—mere text-book substitutes—should disappear. Degrees should not be awarded simply on the result of a written test: the student's record and a piece of work done at leisure should count equally with the examination. Until the far-off day when the university of an industrial centre can move into the suburbs or the country, forming a university city on its own, there should be more hostels, and students should be encouraged, and financed, to live in them. And so on. But these proposals, excellent and important in themselves, are only peripheral to Mr. Truscot's more fundamental and more inclusive concern—to make Redbrick into a university in the fullest sense. And it is here, right at the centre, that one feels the lack of a conception of function, nourished from the actual, strong enough to permeate all the major proposals for reform and direct them towards the desired end.

In his chapter on 'The Nature and Aims of a Modern University' Mr. Truscot asks, 'What is a university?' and he answers, 'A University is a corporation or society which devotes itself to a search after knowledge for the sake of its intrinsic value'. It is, I know, difficult if not impossible to sum up in a phrase 'the function of a university', and the inadequacy of Mr. Truscot's formulation is only fully apparent, as I shall try to show, when it is developed in terms of particular proposals. But even at this level of generalization it is possible to offer a more dynamic conception than Mr. Truscot's 'search after knowledge for the sake of its intrinsic value'. A university, then—to attempt a more adequate formula—can only fulfil its function when all its major activities are permeated and directed by a lively concern for civilized values; when it is, simultaneously, a vehicle for tradition as 'the means by which the vitality of the past enriches the life of the present' and an organ of consciousness through which men may become aware of the basic human needs and problems of to-day. Civilization of course has many aspects and values ('the search after knowledge for the sake of its intrinsic value' is one of them), and a genuine concern for civilization may take many different forms and result in different kinds of emphasis. But unless that concern is actively and specifically *there* even the best intentioned advocates of 'liberal education' will find themselves occupying honorific and decorative positions whilst the real work of university reconstruction is carried out by people with quite different ideas

The test of genuineness is the specific; and just as the existence of a valid conception of function at the heart of university life will reveal itself not in general pronouncements but in what actually goes on in the university day by day, so the worth and potential

effectiveness of programmes must be judged by their content. Some of Mr.Truscot's chapters provide an opportunity for making clear the nature of the inadequacy of his directing ideas.

There is, for example, the question of 'research'. Mr. Truscot maintains that this should be the chief aim of every university and that it is the duty of every university teacher to pursue it. Passing over the extreme form in which the plea is launched (research is said to be not merely as important as teaching but more important), we may welcome the reminder of a truth often saluted in theory but widely ignored in practice: that the worth of a university teacher is inseparable from the vitality with which he pursues and develops his own intellectual interests. But although Mr. Truscot is critical of factual investigation regarded as an end in itself, his own conception of research (pp. 110-111) seems lacking in point and content, and one comes away with the feeling that all kinds of research, apart from the more obviously useless exercises in the higher navvying, are valued equally. This may be unjust; but one looks in vain for a more positive definition of the fruitful lines of work in which a university teacher might be expected to engage. The suggestion is made that every university should have a Research Committee, enquiring annually into work in progress, and reporting to the committees responsible for promotion (p. 120). If this plan were adopted there is no doubt that 'the importance of research would bulk larger in the academic mind', but the value of the results thus obtained is more open to question. What Mr. Truscot fails to bring home is that valuable research is only likely to spring from an attempt to develop living interests and to find answers to urgent problems of the present.[2]

Mr. Truscot's proposals for the reform of the curriculum—and this is a far more important matter—enforce similar conclusions. An urgent problem is how to combine necessary specialization with education in its broadest sense. Mr. Truscot favours what Dr. Löwe calls Humanistic Specialization,[3] that is a liberal and all-round education stemming organically from a 'specialist' course. He is

[2]There is also the question of the time available to the modern university teacher. Mr. Truscot, generalizing from what seems to have been an unusually fortunate experience, maintains that, 'Teaching, preparation for teaching and the necessary share in administration will not occupy the average [professor], at the very most, for more than four or five hours a day, excluding Saturdays and Sundays . . And even this goes on for barely more than half the year'. This is probably not true for a large number of professors, and it is certainly not true for any but a small minority of teachers below the rank of professor. Conditions vary enormously from university to university and from department to department, but I do not think I am peculiar in finding the great difficulties in the way of getting on with some continuous and rewarding work, apart from teaching, one of the most harassing conditions of life in a modern university.

[3]In his valuable little book, *The Universities in Transformation*.

severely and rightly critical of attempts to 'broaden the mind' by giving the undergraduate 'lectures on half-a-dozen miscellaneous subjects in no way related to his main field of study'; but whereas Dr. Löwe insists on the need for an organizing discipline from a centre, Mr. Truscot is content to be vaguely humanistic. The selected Honours course

> 'can, and should, give "general information about a wide range of others". Take two of the Arts subjects most commonly read for Honours: English Literature and French. The intensive study of either involves a knowledge of the history and social conditions of the country concerned from the earliest times to the present day; and the history of France is inextricably intertwined with the history of western Europe'.

So far so good. The paragraph continues:

> 'Through English literature we may study the Authorized Version of the Bible: theology, in Hooker, Andrewes, Donne and Baxter; philosophy, in Bacon, Hume and Berkeley; history, in Burke and Macaulay; educational theory, in Ascham; political science, in Hobbes, Bentham and Mill; discovery, in Hakluyt and Raleigh. Chapman will lead the student into Greek mythology; Gibbon, into Roman History; Carlyle, into France and Germany; Lockhart and Southey, into Spain. If he seeks inspiration from character and ideals, where can he find better and more varied models than in Shakespeare, Browne, Bunyan, Milton, Herbert and Wordsworth? The French course, apart from the purely linguistic training which it offers, contains no less variety, and an equally large number of first-rank authors lie outside the field of pure literature. Froissart, Joinville and Commines take us into mediaeval history; Rabelais and Fénelon, into education; Fontenelle and Montesquieu, into science and law; Sainte-Beuve and Taine, into criticism. An understanding of Descartes lies at the root of modern philosophy, while neither Pascal nor Bossuet can have much meaning save for those with some knowledge of theology. Rousseau and Voltaire are in themselves two branches of a complete education. The devoutly minded may drink deeply of Saint François de Sales; worldly wisdom may be gleaned from La Rochefoucauld, La Bruyère and the incomparable Montaigne; while the value of an intensive study of Molière is second only to that of the study of Shakespeare' (pp. 135-136).

To the comment that this assorted jumble of names is betraying Mr. Truscot might reply that he had chosen his authors as random examples, that his list is not intended as definitive, and that he would not expect all the writers mentioned to be approached with the impartial deference that the well-trained undergraduate pays to 'the classics of our literature'.[4] But how are such courses as these—'theology in Hooker, Andrewes, Donne and Baxter . . educational theory in Ascham . . .'—to be organized into significant wholes? There is no hint of an answer, for what is lacking here is a clear

realization of the nature of literary criticism, of the way in which a disciplined criticism can work through beyond literature to the civilization behind it, and of the meaning of a living tradition. And it is only in such a realization that we can find the principles of organization that will make Honours courses in the Arts Faculties something more valuable than specialized disciplines in watertight compartments.

We return to the question of a centre. 'This book contends that the whole art of educating the undergraduate, in the deeper sense, must be based upon the instilling into him of a true idea of the nature of a university . . . We have to show him that, despite all appearances, the university is not an institution, but a society'. Redbrick, we know, presents special difficulties—difficulties in the way of continuous intellectual collaboration and in the way of profitable informal relations between teachers and students which, as very present hindrances in the way of the development of a genuine society, Mr. Truscot himself has shown to be something more than 'appearances'. Because of these special difficulties a determined attempt to promote the growth of a genuine university society would, I think, start from a direct attack on the curriculum. In the Arts Faculty what we have to do is to test out the ways in which the student can be helped to explore, not simply 'fields of knowledge' but aspects of civilization in their mutual relations, an exploration that would enlist the student's present interests, as a motive for discovery and, at the same time, sharpen and inform his sense of the present: there would be 'discipline' enough, as the practical and specific suggestions in F. R. Leavis's *Education and the University* make plain. The particular nature of courses and methods would be a matter for co-operative experiment; but the mere attempt, by a group of active collaborators, to discover what the problems are towards which different courses might be directed and what kinds of synthesis of studies are profitable and practicable —this itself would promote 'the idea of a university' at the heart of university life.[5] And the attempt, as it developed, would soon have a decided influence on the general nature of student life. As things are, it is largely because the undergraduate's formal studies so often lack a cutting edge on the present that student activities, as Mr. Truscot complains, are dominatd by a minority of 'poli-

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[4]I should add that Mr. Truscot shows elsewhere that he understands the immense value of intensive study of a single important book. 'At the end of a course of twelve lectures on Pascal's *Lettres Provinciales* the student may not be qualified to express himself critically on the theological questions which it raises, but he will be better educated by the experience than if he spends the same twelve hours in taking a deceptively comprehensive course on "Outlines of Theology for Laymen" ' (p. 138).

[5]The present trend in favour of 'Combined Honours' provides an opportunity, even though at some places Combined Honours are not so much combined as compounded of bits from different courses.

ticians'[6] whilst the majority are content with the simpler forms of diversion in the intervals of swotting for a good degree.

If, in short, there were really active a conception of the university as an organ of consciousness, maintaining what is living in the past and clarifying and shaping the life of the present, even the special difficulties of Redbrick would not be the formidable obstacles that they now seem in the way of a genuinely humane education. But unless that conception is *made* active—by particular men working as best they can in particular places—the modern universities will continue their uneasy compromise between 'disinterested scholarship' on the one hand and technical instruction on the other, with the balance tilted more and more decidedly in favour of 'the needs of industry', now for some time presented to us as 'the needs of the State'.

L. C. KNIGHTS.

ADVERTISING AND CIVILISATION

VOICE OF CIVILISATION: AN ENQUIRY INTO ADVERTISING; by Denys Thompson (Muller, 7/6).

Recently I turned to 'the daily paper' for more information about a debate in Parliament which had interested me in the B.B.C. News Bulletin the night before. I was irritated, but not altogether surprised, to find that the Commons debate had been seriously curtailed to make room for a gigantic advertisement, which could with ease have been condensed into a short paragraph, for it said little more than 'Racked with pain at 7 a.m.; throat and nose wonderfully cleared at 7.30 thanks to so-and-so'.

This would have been permissible (by 20-century standards) in peace-time, for the Commons debate would most likely have been continued on another page out of the 12 or 16 at the editor's disposal. But in war-time, when the penny press is restricted to 4 pages (with 8 smaller pages for the picture papers), it was nothing less than a scandal, though of course justified in Parliament and elsewhere by the plea: 'No interference with private enterprise, the backbone of Britain . . .'

Mr. Thompson's admirable book is, I believe, too light and easy on the amount of space *still* given to advertisements in these days of paper shortage. Although he deals with severity about 'cashing in on the war effort' (p. 212) and says (p. 216) that 'half-

[6]Usually, of course, by the more naïve left-wingers, as Mr. Truscot also notes. A student of my acquaintance, provoked by the current insistence in student societies that the aim of education is to make opponents of Fascism, recently submitted to the Arts Bulletin of the National Union of Students a short and well-written article on 'The Inadequacy of being Anti-Fascist'. It was rejected on the grounds that it might be mischievous politically. It is doubtful how many university teachers would see in this incident a direct reflexion on their own teaching.

a-dozen superfluous advertisements in the ''national'' Press could have been made into 170,000 books', he doesn't mention the fact that all classes of news (from politics to sport) have been drastically curtailed, whereas advertising, though diminished (see p. 163), has gained *in proportion.*

This is a minor criticism. I have no major criticism at all to make of Mr. Thompson's book, which seems to me well-documented, sober and extremely convincing. The queries I made on certain points when I first hastily skipped through the book were nearly all of them answered on a second thorough reading. It has both a general and an educational use; general in that it is extremely topical, with the persuasive kind of advertising lessened under war-time conditions and the public being trained by the Ministries of Health and Food in the use of the 'simple' dishes of their forefathers; educational in that the Editor of *English in Schools* is aware more than most English teachers of the vicious influence of this 'civilisation' (to use the author's ironic term) upon the minds of the young. I was glad to see Mr. Thompson asserting that advertising is complementary (as well as complimentary) to the cinema. Both can only be counteracted by the library. It is a gratifying thing (which many English teachers must have noticed) that even a little reading can put the worlds of the film producer and the advertising agent into their proper perspective in the mind of (say) a shabby child of fourteen.

I have purposely emphasized the 'shabby', because I have a small bone (a wish-bone, in fact) to pick with Mr. Thompson over the relative resistance of the different classes to the pressure of advertising men. I think that the resistance of the 'lower' class which reads the *Daily Express, John Bull, Everybody's,* and the *News of the World,* is at least equal to the resistance of the 'upper' class which reads the *Times,* the *Tatler, Punch* and the *Observer.* Although Mr. Thompson is not blind to this equality (he says on p. 81 that 'there is no boundary' between the advertisement which appeals to the class that fills in coupons and 'another which flatters the consumer's taste and discrimination . . .'), he appears to contradict it on p. 204, where he calls upon *Mass-Observation* (of all people) to confirm him. I should have thought that it was the greatest criticism to be made of *Mass-Observation* that the authors take the same view of the 'masses' as such novelists as Mitchison, Williams-Ellis, Upward, Calder-Marshall, Warner, etc. do of the 'proletariat'. I would even qualify the statement of Mr. Rowntree, quoted by Mr. Thompson on p. 23, that 'for many people, football pools actually constitute the chief interest of their lives'. There is a germ of truth in this assertion, but Mr. Thompson should have qualified it by explaining that there is no fundamental difference between the railway porter who gets 'his chief interest in life' from the Pools and the ex-public-school man who gets his from stamp-collecting.

I think there is a tendency in Mr. Thompson's excellent book to underrate the resistance of *all* classes to the advertising menace. (This may have been deliberate, to point the warning for the post-

war world, if 'the present healthy clearance' does *not* continue). Mr. Thompson mentions 'convenience', but he doesn't, I believe, lay nearly so much stress upon it as the evidence would suggest; it is so much easier, and particularly for the busy lower-class housewife, to ask for Vaseline at 2d. instead of Paraff. Moll. Flav. at 1d. —to take one of the author's examples. This 'convenience' is the advertiser's chief asset; incomparably more important than any other in his bag of tricks. More important even than snobbery—which is the occupation of leisure hours.

Mr. Thompson does well not to lay the entire blame on the advertiser. He simply plays his allotted part in the scheme of things. Previous governments have not altogether been to blame. The 'industry' has got out of hand in comparatively recent years. To curb it is the function of post-war governments, and particularly, as Mr. Thompson insists, of the Ministries of Health and Food. Many members of all parties in both Houses are concerned about the spread of this typically 20th-century 'disease', and such books as Mr. Thompson's (particularly if they are disseminated to a wider public by the Birds of the ninepenny press) are urgently needed to increase the scepticism of the public as American methods of advertising come to be more and more used. It is an important fact that where the advertising menace has got the most terrible strangle-hold on the public mind (the U.S.A.) there is also the greatest scepticism towards it.

I was rather surprised to notice that Mr. Thompson shouldn't have made the obvious comment when he quoted on p. 11 the *Daily Mail* front page as being worth in advertising revenue £1,400. It is a well-known fact that in recent years (before the war) both the *Mail* and the *Telegraph* have fallen into line with the rest of the penny press by changing their front pages from advertisements into news. So, whatever influence the advertising managers had over the editors, they couldn't change the public's apparent desire for news. (Both papers reported an increase in sales not long after). This is a refreshing change in the normal subordination of the newspaper to the advertiser that should have been noted.

Concluding these very minor criticisms, I think that Mr. Thompson should have referred in passing to the 'notorious' decline in the number of men who wear hats, a decline that even the ingenious advertiser couldn't check; to a smaller decline in the number of men wearing braces and suspenders; to the point of the advertisement quoted on p. 89, which wasn't that the public were impressed by the story of the 'farmer's boy' who 'now owns baronial halls', but that they were struck by the assertion, 'I smoked the 30-a-day cigarettes every working man needs', when to smoke this amount is the unenviable habit of a very heavy smoker indeed; to the failure of the attempt (quoted on p. 89) to make the public 'Easter-conscious'; and, finally, to the curious fact (which I have on the best authority) that the Army of this war drinks less and smokes more than the Army of 1914, when the expenditure on advertising these products has been roughly the same from 1918 to 1939.

R. C. CHURCHILL.

ENGLISH CHARACTER

ORIENTATIONS, by Sir Ronald Storrs (Ivor Nicholson and Watson, 10/6).
MAN AND BOY, by Sir Stephen Tallents (Faber, 21/-).

'For Cairo Society the golden epoch must have been the later 'eighties and the 'nineties. The genius of Lord Cromer had established peace, progress and prosperity. British influence dominated, but had not yet learned to domineer . . . Of this social phase 1904 may be said to have marked the decline, 1914 the fall . . . Officially, and for a time, the change was entirely for the good. Flagrant abuses and "protections" vanished and a score of harmless necessary reforms were made possible for the Egyptian Government . . . But with the decline of foreign political influence and so of foreign social prestige; with the increasing numbers of minor British officials and the extension of the club and sports system; with the multiplication of the hotels, and the mass production of the peach-fed standardized tourist "doing" the whole country in ten days . . . there came less mixing with and understanding of Egyptians and foreigners, and a general diminution of social caste, *cachet*, and character . . . The classic process of colonization had begun. Everybody and everything was becoming cleaner, richer, easier and more proper, but somehow (and I have seen the symptoms elsewhere) there was less fun. . . . Exchanges of visits were now almost unknown and the hundred contacts and humanities that come from knowing people "at home"—from little Ahmad's teething or Mustafa's progress in English or in football—were hopelessly excluded. Nor was there, save for one or two notable exceptions, the faintest effort on the part of the official's wife to make the acquaintance, still less cultivate the friendship, of the wives or daughters of her husband's colleagues or subordinates; and it was with an air of virtuous resignation that she steeled herself to sacrifice an afternoon for a call upon an Egyptian or Turkish lady as likely as not better born, better bred, better read, better looking and better dressed than herself'.

'My companion calling for his tiresome drinks at all hours of the day. I see I shall have to strugggle more and more against developing into a Prig: but the whole paraphernalia of whiskies and sodas, the plugging and wadding up of great briar pipes, the bubbling and sucking, the pointless gusty sigh of relief (from what?), the halting oracular utterance of commonplaces!'

'Nearly thirty years of the Near and Middle East have inclined me to the opinion of those who would assist the Eastern Churches to grow stronger within by education and training, rather than weaken them by enticing their members into other denominations. Nothing seemed to denationalize an Arab, a Copt or an Armenian like becoming a Protestant, or "Brutestánt" as he more often pronounced himself. I could never see that his almost unctuous

respectability, his open contempt for the venerable institution which he or his father had abandoned, were at all superior to incense and ikons. If he wished you Happy Easter as you left the service, it was with a gentlemanly Nordic restraint, as if sympathizing with a bereavement; whereas his cousin of the old faith shouted aloud "Christ is risen", and in some places fired his gun exultantly against the wall of the Church'.

'Officials, more particularly executive officials (Governors included), cannot be considered as interchangeable parts in a standardized automobile. Some with African experience were unable to mix on friendly terms with educated Cypriots without seeming to themselves to sacrifice something of their position as members of the governing race. The wife of an officer excellent at his work, told me with pride on the eve of his transfer that they had been in Cyprus fourteen years, and never had a "native" inside their house; and was genuinely shocked when I reminded her that she owed to the Cypriots the food she was at that moment consuming (at Government House) and the clothes on her back. I sympathized with these late uprooted officials when, after twenty-eight years' service in the Near and Middle East, I found myself promoted to the rule of a million and a half blacks, of whom one only, the Paramount Chief of Barotseland, could have his hand shaken by a white. I did not dispute the protocol, but found the contrast, after lands where you gave your hand to and shared the food of the poorest Bedu camel-driver (or his eyes wondered where you had been bred) almost overwhelmingly disagreeable'.

'He had been Oriental Secretary for a good many years, and was frequented and admired by a few senior Englishmen. By the juniors I met he was inevitably cited as "knowing the East very well—a bit too well, if you ask me; what you want's a plain straightforward Englishman who'll put these fellows in their places, and keep 'em there". I remember thinking at the time that it was lucky for England he could not, anyhow, much resemble those who discussed him . . . On a deal table a typewriter clacked. Above it there loomed a vast drooping moustache surmounted by a hook nose and melancholy kind dark eyes. I stood at the side and understood that the Oriental Secretary was taking his luncheon . . . Against the plate was balanced the current issue of *al-Mokattam* (then the paramount of Arabic dailies) the leading article of which, as he ate, he read, translated in his head, and transmuted directly through the machine into mellow Johnsonian prose . . . He was extremely well-read, especially in English and French eighteenth-century literature, an exquisite precisian in language and a perennially amusing conversationalist. On most afternoons he walked abroad, dressed with a distinguished improbability. His coat was old, his trousers bagged at the knee and sagged at the waist, his boots were almost mediaeval in their turn up. On his head a battered straw hat; rather beyond heel a mongrel but *sympathique* cur: the whole enclosing a man of genius'.

These are extracts not from works of fiction of the school of E. M. Forster, but from the autobiography of Sir Ronald Storrs, the reissue of which this year provides an opportunity for calling the attention of those who missed the first edition in 1937. It can confidently be recommended as the most entertaining high-level reading, a fat and juicy work, elegantly and sincerely as well as divertingly written. But to describe it as the best of bedside books is to undervalue it. It is of course known as a unique source of information about recent history in the Near East, more especially the history of Palestine since Allenby's entry into Jerusalem. Sir Ronald's thirty years included service as Oriental Secretary at Cairo, Governor of Jerusalem and Governor of Cyprus; while during the Great War he was Political Officer in Mesopotamia, his memoirs supplementing and commenting on what we know from other sources of the personalities and activities of Gertrude Bell, Sir Percy Cox and T. E. Lawrence. He gives the indispensable inside account, impartially sympathetic, of the situation in Palestine during and since his time of office there: it is the classic example of a hopelessly complex problem (more evidently insoluble than that of India) handled with good intentions by those in office and by Sir Ronald himself with inspired goodness of heart and head. No one after reading Sir Ronald's chapters could continue to accuse the British of Machiavellian policy in Palestine or believe that some simple straightforward proposals would solve everything.

This brings us to the real significance of the book, for besides its entertainment and informational value *Orientations* is a tribute, chiefly an unconscious one, to virtues of the English governing-class character which it has been the fashion to deny in intellectual circles (centring on Bloomsbury and radiating to India on the one side, America on the other), with incalculable harm. As a desirable and judicially necessary corrective to *A Passage to India* we fortunately have the portrait of the Military Governor of Jerusalem, taking over as the Turks withdrew leaving behind them complete chaos. As soon as the elements of law, order and communal living were re-established, the more difficult problems of racial, religious and natural hostilities arose. Easter meant the culminating ceremonies of three religious cycles, Christian, Moslem and Hebrew and had always brought trouble, but 'Easter came but twice or (in certain phases of the Armenian Calendar) but thrice a year. The Wailing Wall was a perennial anxiety'. Worse still, 'the local and indigenous Christian communities needed alas! for their fratricidal tumults no outside provocation'. The Governor of Jerusalem's contribution to the welfare of Palestine was to participate sympathetically in the difficulties and ceremonies of every party. For many years he took part with reverent enthusiasm, and in the appropriate languages, in the Passover and in the Orthodox ceremony of the Holy Fire, and in the Armenian and Latin religious services; and bandied ribald jests with Moslem processions to avert bloodshed. In addition to protecting the aesthetically and religiously interesting buildings, he founded the Pro-Jerusalem Society for promoting civic

and aesthetic welfare and personally raised large sums of money for it in America and England. He founded a Jerusalem School of Music, for he was passionately musical, and he encouraged artists and craftsmen. These are only a few of many such aspects of a very impressive kind of character, one whose most evident quality was the instinct to make the best of people by sympathetic personal relations and practical assistance. The pleasure in appreciating shades of character and the ability to enter into alien cultures is what might be expected in a novelist rather than an administrator. That the sum total of these characteristics is not peculiar to the author of *Orientations,* though more highly developed and exquisitely expressed there than elsewhere, many other memoirs prove. A lesser example is Sir Stephen Tallents's autobiography, *Man and Boy,* which has just appeared. Except for a comparatively brief spell on a mission to settle matters in the Baltic States, where he was Governor of Riga at a difficult period in 1920, he has always been a Civil Servant. But in his book too there is a similar convincing embodiment of these administrative and essentially human virtues, not only transparent integrity and decency but the sympathy which is based not on softness but penetrating intelligence. Sir Ronald Storrs writes of himself at twenty-five going home on leave from Brindisi:

'I went straight to Cook's to enquire the next train for Milan. The clerk said it went at two. "Heavens!" I cried, "Have I got to stay in this hole seven hours?" I can still, with a flush of shame, see and hear him answer: "I've stayed here for seven years". I found my conduct in this matter so dreadful that I returned a few minutes before the office closed and took the clerk out to luncheon'.

To be this kind of person and to remain so is a rare thing no doubt. Sir Ronald Storrs was the product of a really pious as well as cultivated Engish home, and his autobiography is pervaded by religious belief and Christian feeling in their most impressive form. But the more ordinary virtues that he shares with Englishmen of his class and education (public school and university) are represented for instance by the sometime Governor of Riga.

What these, and many other quite different memoirs, bear witness to is that the strength rather than, as often alleged, the weakness, of England lies in this national character, a product at least as much of the home as of the public school. For the common feature of such memoirs is lack of pleasant memories of school. The defects of public-school training were made good by home, and Oxford or Cambridge supplied the rest—the real training and development of character. Sir Stephen Tallents writes, after a lukewarm reminiscence of Harrow, which 'seemed not only Spartan but Philistine. Undoubtedly it was both': 'But chiefly I look back upon my Balliol time as the opportunity for a first experiment . . . in the art of free living. Encouraging that experiment, Balliol put a simple and austere pattern of living before us. It gave us a lively sense of

the virtues of public service. It tried to give us what Low has admirably described as "a sense of right and wrong with a high flash point".' Sir Ronald Storrs, after a really depressing picture of schooldays at Charterhouse, hastens to add 'It is, however, easy enough to criticize public schools and the public-school spirit . . . If negative and uncreative critics would only travel abroad and make a study of youth in general from Calais to Calcutta and Khartoum, instructed (rather than educated) for the most part without any idea of this spirit, they could hardly fail to realize the positive magnitude of the public-school achievement. Like salt in food, it must be absent to be appreciated'. And in a similar spirit this most enlightened and sympathetic of administrators desired that some credit at least should be registered for British efforts, when in Baghdad in 1917 he wrote:

'These people are I suppose as were the Egyptians in 1882; Turkish disgusts and annoyances fresh before their eyes and mightily relieved by *Pax* and *Progressus Britannicae*. I seriously recommend that now, before anything is altered, an accurate illustrated description of the place be published in English, French, and Arabic so that they may not forget the pit from whence they were digged; so that the future tarbushed elastic-sided-booted patriots may not claim for themselves before all the world the exclusive credit for cleanliness, health, water, electricity and a hundred-fold budget. Let the motto of Mesopotamia be *Non Nobis, Domine,* or Lest We Forget'. He notes elsewhere that liberated peoples 'discover that under the mild impersonal British rule lapses from manners (hitherto ruinous) pass unnoticed, anyhow unpunished' with increasingly undesirable results.

The poise that is revealed in so many of these memoirs is that of character, and very easily distinguishable from the false poise that is derived from nothing more respectable or fundamental than a sense of belonging to the best people (as in many Etonian writings). We can see what Professor Brogan means when he writes (in *The English People*): 'That the main capital of a country, within very wide limits, is the skill, industry, character, and view of life of its inhabitants, is a truth easily neglected. That political and educational methods, traditions of certain skills, inherited capital assets, and prestige may all be more important than mere undeveloped natural resources is difficult to believe although in New England the United States has an example of this truth even more striking than that furnished by Old England'. In spite of Bloomsbury, it seems to us that such memoirs as Sir Ronald Storrs's and Sir Stephen Tallents's incarnate the best type of Englishman we have for export or advertisement purposes. And since it is impossible to say how far, or rather how little, they are the product of the public school system (Professor Brogan seems to conclude that there is more to be said for the system than against it), let reformers beware how lightly they undertake to throw away something for which no better alternative has yet been discovered.

Q.D.L.

HUGH MACDIARMID

LUCKY POET : A Self-Study in Literature and Political Ideas, by Hugh MacDiarmid (*C. M. Grieve*) (*Methuen*, 21/-).

At a time when Scots poetry consisted of the sort of thing that might be imagined to appeal to the Glasgow Stock Exchange, and when research into Scots literature was of the type that collated all the passages in Burns that referred to birds, and classified them under Birds of Passage, Birds of Ill Omen, etc., C. M. Grieve did some necessary scavenging and cleared away a lot of literary scrap by debunking the St. Robert Burns of Burns's nights and reasserting the true claims of Burns to our attention as a poet. He himself employed Scots not nostalgically or sentimentally, but by putting it to adult, contemporary uses. He has been elaborately cold-shouldered by the Scottish press, criticised spitefully by Scottish public figures ('Yahoos', he calls them), and made the subject of a mean-minded 'whispering campaign' for his pains. Almost alone he worked to rescue Scotland from provincialism, and in doing so tended to become a sort of second Admirable Crichton: he tried not only to be its critic and poet, but also its philosopher, arch-linguist, Celtic folklorist, botanist, chemist, professor of semantics, orientalist and so on. To all comers he was also to prove a very good hand at the more virulent and envenomed sort of invective. The magnitude of his task was bound to sour the good nature of the most magnanimous of men and seriously corrode whatever critical acumen he started out with: and these 426 pages bear ample evidence of the strain.

In his *Contemporary Scottish Studies* (1926) we were told that Edwin Muir was 'incontestably in the first flight of contemporary critics of welt-literatur' (typical touch, that *welt-literatur*, but now things have come to a sad pass and Mr. Muir, we are told, is now 'a well-known reviewer whose prose has a marked resemblance to Mr. Ramsay MacDonald's' (p. 20). It evidently would not stand comparison with Mary Webb's, singled out for praise on p. 84, or that of that arch-sentimentalist, William Power, who is quoted favourably throughout the book. Another of Mr. Muir's sins is not to be familiar with Count Korzybski's non-Aristotelian semantics, for which he is castigated on p. 348. We learn on p. 115 that Fred Astaire is a great artist, and later that Day Lewis is preferable to Auden and Spender. (Much of his criticism of the English Literary Left is quite justifiable, but they were less acceptable in Scots left circles, not because these are less gullible than English, but because, *pace* MacDiarmid, they are still less literate). But

> 'Exclusion from all power be theirs
> Who do not know at least
> Mazundar's Typical Selections from Oriya Literature', etc.

as Grieve says on a later page. It is difficult at times to believe that the same man who with unerring finger points to the true greatness and perennial literary vigour of Burns, who can correct Prof. Grierson's evaluation of Scott and recognize that the better Scott is the writer of 'Wi' the help o' the Lord I hae loupit ower a dyke' rather than the writer of English 'novelese', can talk about his 'long unpublished poem concerned with world-consciousness', and write the breathless, superficial, space-filling stuff of Grieve the Thinker remarking 'But I do not follow Bergson in his view that etc.', and 'Nor do I conclude with Kant that etc.'. If his estimates of left writers are typical efforts of independent Scots left literary criticism, it can only be remarked that the *Left Review* has a lot to answer for. This too seems a typical sample of left writing:

> Wipe out the false word 'humanism'; our art is not to be Misericordious, toothless, pacifist, but the art of full-blooded men.

Grieve's *'A Drunk Man Looks at a Thistle* and similar works will be found more lasting than his windier efforts, and this pre-eminently affected the better Scots poets such as William Soutar and Ann Scott-Moncrieff. His later work is not organic, because his experience lacks progressive organization; it is not that like Arnold's Romantics he does not know enough or even merely that what he knows he doesn't know profoundly enough, but rather that all this reasoning and acquired knowledge is not put to poetic uses or digested into Grieve's personal poetic idiom. There are worse accomplishments than knowing how to make a little go a long way. But Grieve scorns organization: the Celts and the East apparently would have nothing to do with it, which is good enough for him. Meantime he prefers to hold on with Gerald Heard awaiting 'a new mutation occurring in the "soul" of man' (p. 404). He glories in his 'equivocal nature' (p. 70)—which is at least honest, and aspires after the condition of Bertrand Russell whose frivolity he regards as he does his own, 'with no little equanimity'.

It is surprising that Grieve should have written good poetry at all; that he should so faithfully continue to hammer home such excellent critical home-truths about the fecundity of the Scots literary folk-tradition, the real strength of Scott as a writer and the edge and vitality in Burns's use of language, and indicate the real sources to which Scots writing should turn, that he should refuse to 'acquiesce in the mental and aesthetic victimization of the masses' (p. 97) and should have fought all the necessary literary battles almost alone in Scotland. It is incredible that the same person should write so irresponsibly and very often so uncritically as he does for the greater part of these four-hundred pages. It is a pity, too, as the lessons he has to teach are so very much worth learning.

JOHN DURKAN.

THE DUNCIAD

THE POEMS OF ALEXANDER POPE, Vol. V: THE DUNCIAD, Edited by James Sutherland (Methuen, 30/-).

Yes, one concedes grudgingly, overcoming the inevitable revulsion as one turns the pages of this new edition, in which the poem trickles thinly through a desert of apparatus, to disappear time and again from sight—yes, there has to be a *Dunciad* annotated, garnished and be-prosed in this way. A very large proportion of the apparatus, after all, comes down from the eighteenth century with the poem, and the whole, though to read it all through will be worth no one's while, is enlightening documentation of the age that produced Pope and of which Pope made poetry. Yet, as the editor in his introduction insists—'It has never sufficiently been recognized that in the *Dunciad* one of the greatest artists in English poetry found the perfect material for his art', he did make poetry, and it is the poetry that matters; so that one has to follow up one's concession with the remark that, though this new monument of scholarship will have to go into all the libraries for reference, it is not the edition in which the *Dunciad* should be read. The material is one thing, the poetry another. In fact, the sufficient recognition won't come except in company with the recognition that notes are not necessary: the poetry doesn't depend upon them in any essential respect.

'The art', says Professor Sutherland, 'which Pope lavished upon this poem has too often been obscured by an unnecessary concern for his victims'. Yes; and, more generally, by an unnecessary concern *with* his victims—a concern of a kind that notes, especially obtrusive ones, inevitably encourage. The 'fading of its personalities' remarked by Professor Sutherland as something that appreciation of the *Dunciad* suffers from is really an advantage, and one we ought not to refuse. For eighteenth-century readers it must have been hard not to start away continually from the poetry to thinking about the particular historical victim and the grounds of Pope's animus against him; for modern readers it should be much easier to appreciate the poetry as poetry—to realize that Pope has created something the essential interest of which lies within itself, in what it is. Yet where satire is concerned there appear to be peculiar difficulties in the way of recognizing the nature of art and of the approach to it, as Professor Sutherland bears inadvertent witness in the last sentence of his introduction:

> 'the criticism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has been far too much concerned with the moral issues raised by Pope's satire, and too little interested in its purely aesthetic values'.

'Aesthetic' is a term the literary critic would do well to deny himself. Opposed to 'moral' as it is in this sentence it certainly doesn't generate light. Moral values enter inevitably into the appreciation of the *Dunciad,* if it is judged to be a considerable work; the problem is to bring them in with due relevance, and the bringing of them in is the appreciation of Pope's art. How are malice, resentment, spite, contempt, and the other negative attitudes and feelings that we can't doubt to have played a large part in the genesis of his poetry, turned in that poetry into something that affects us as being so very different?

We don't feel the personalities as personal. More than that, we don't, for the most part, even in places where animus is very apparent, feel the total effect to be negative, expressing a hostile and destructive will. The force of this judgment comes out when we look by way of comparison at Swift. The final impression that Swift, in any representative place, leaves us with is one of having been exposed to an intense, unremitting and endlessly resourceful play of contempt, disgust, hatred and the will to spoil and destroy. The contrast brings home to us the sense in which Pope, in practising his art of verse, is engaged, whatever his materials, in positive creation. It is Swift's prose I am thinking of in the first place, but the contrast is no less striking and significant when made between verse and verse. In verse, in fact, Swift is more barely and aridly negative (the air is 'thoroughly small and dry'), and more summarily destructive, than in prose; he never achieves anything approaching the complexity characteristic of the *Digression Concerning the Use of Madness in a Commonwealth.* In the following we have the richest in the way of organization that his verse yields:

> When Celia in her glory shews,
> If Strephon would but stop his nose,
> (Who now so impiously blasphemes
> Her ointments, daubs, and paints, and creams,
> Her washes, slops, and every clout,
> With which he makes so foul a rout;)
> He soon would learn to think like me,
> And bless his ravish'd sight to see
> Such order from confusion sprung,
> Such gaudy tulips raised from dung.

Effects like that of the closing couplet are not common in Swift's verse, but the sourly nagging meanness, the sawing meagreness, of the movement in general is representative. No one, of course, would carry out a solemn comparison of Swift and Pope as poets. My point is simply, by the contrast with Swift, who is not positively an Augustan—though he is nothing else positive, to bring out what is meant by saying that Pope, in practising his art of verse, is being an Augustan of a most positive kind. Against any of Swift's verse (if you want decasyllabics take the close of *A City Shower*) set this:

This labour past, by Bridewell all descend,
(As morning-pray'r and flagellation end.)
To where Fleet-ditch with disemboguing streams
Rolls the large tribute of dead dogs to Thames,
The King of Dykes! than whom, no sluice of mud
With deeper sable blots the silver flood.

It is not enough to talk in the usual way (I have just seen a Sunday review that quotes the passage, which I had already marked) about the beauty of that last couplet. That beauty is inseparable from the whole habit of the versification. And in saying this one recognizes that 'versification' here involves more than the term is generally felt to convey. When Pope is preoccupied with the metrical structure, the weight, and the pattern of his couplets he is bringing to bear on his 'materials' habits of thought and feeling, and habits of ordering thought and feeling. The habits are those of a great and ardent representative of Augustan civilization. The result is that even when he is closest to Swift he remains very un-Swiftian in effect: what we note at once as the characteristic movement (no simple metrical matter, of course) makes a radical difference:

Like the vile straw that's blown about the streets
The needy Poet sticks to all he meets,
Coach'd, carted, trod upon, now loose, now fast,
In the Dog's tail his progress ends at last.

The part of Augustan civilization in Pope's creative triumph is peculiarly apparent in the Fourth Book of the *Dunciad*. The pre-eminence of this book doesn't seem to be at all generally recognized. There is no sign, for instance, that the present editor recognizes it any more than Leslie Stephen did, writing his 'English Men of Letters' *Pope* before 1880. There can, then, be no harm in reiterating that the Fourth Book stands, not only (so much later in date as it is) apart from the other books, but much above them: it is a self-sufficient poem. The opening has an obvious relevance to my immediate argument:

Yet, yet a moment, one dim Ray of Light
Indulge, dread Chaos, and eternal Night!
Of darkness visible so much be lent,
As half to shew, half veil the deep Intent.
Ye Pow'rs! whose Mysteries restor'd I sing,
To whom Time bears me on his rapid wing,
Suspend a while your Force inertly strong,
Then take at once the Poet and the Song.

This astonishing poetry ought to be famous and current for the unique thing it is. Consider how triumphantly it enlists Milton into an Augustan sublime. Faced with this passage as a detached fragment, and forgetting (if that can be granted as credible) where

one had read it, what would one make of it? It could have been written, one would have to conclude, only by Pope, but one would hardly guess that it belonged to a satire. Yet within ten lines the poem breaks out into a most lively play of imaginative wit, overtly satirical, and the transition is irresistibly sure:

> Now flam'd the Dog-star's unpropitious ray,
> Smote ev'ry Brain, and wither'd ev'ry Bay;
> Sick was the Sun, the Owl forsook his bow'r,
> The moon-struck Prophet felt the madding hour:
> Then rose the Seed of Chaos, and of Night,
> To blot out Order, and extinguish Light,
> Of dull and venal a new World to mold,
> And bring Saturnian days of Lead and Gold.
>
> She mounts the Throne: her head a Cloud conceal'd
> In broad Effulgence all below reveal'd,
> ('Tis thus aspiring Dulness ever shines)
> Soft on her lap her Laureat son reclines.
>
> Beneath her foot-stock, Science groans in Chains,
> And *Wit* dreads Exile, Penalties and Pains.
> There foam'd rebellious *Logic*, gagg'd and bound,
> There, stript, fair *Rhet'ric* languish'd on the ground;
> His blunted Arms by *Sophistry* are born,
> And shameless *Billingsgate* her Robes adorn.
> *Morality*, by her false Guardians drawn,
> *Chicane* in Furs, and *Casuistry* in Lawn,
> Gasps as they straiten at each end the cord,
> And dies, when Dulness gives her Page the word.
> Mad *Mathesis* alone was unconfin'd,
> Too mad for mere material chains to bind,
> Now to pure Space lifts her extatic stare,
> Now running round the Circle, finds it square.

The key to Pope's command of the sublime, and to his mastery of transition, presents itself in the couplet:

> Then rose the Seed of Chaos, and of Night,
> To blot out Order, and extinguish Light . . .

'Order' for Pope is no mere word, but a rich concept imaginatively realized: ideal Augustan civilization. It is his greatness as a poet that he can relate the polite Augustan social culture always present in Augustan idiom and movement with something more profound than a code of manners: a code adequate to being thought of as the basis and structure of a great civilization. We have him doing it in this book of the *Dunciad*. 'Order' (associated with 'Light') imparts its grandeur to the opening, and it is the comprehensive positive from which the satire works (in ways I discuss in *Revaluation*, c. III). It is everywhere implicitly there, or within easy recall, and it explains the mastery of transition that goes with Pope's astonishing variety. As the antithesis of triumphant Chaos it in-

forms the prophetic vision of the close with that tremendously imaginative and moving grandeur.[1]

That close, of course, with its reminders of the century of Marvell and Donne, gives us a Pope who is more than Augustan. And in so doing it serves as an admonition against leaving an over-simplifying account of him uncorrected. Though it is his creativeness—for all his satiric bent, he is an essentially creative spirit—that puts Pope in so different a relation to Augustan culture from Swift's, his creativeness is not merely a matter of his being able to realize an ideal Augustan order. The contrast with Swift comes out in another way. The respect in which the two writers (who were closely associated in the brewing of the *Dunciad*) have most affinity is represented by this characteristic piece of Swift's prose:

> 'Meantime it is my earnest request that so useful an undertaking may be entered upon (if their Majesties please) with all convenient speed, because I have a strong inclination before I leave the world to taste a blessing which we mysterious writers can seldom reach till we have got into our graves, whether it is that fame, being a fruit grafted on the body, can hardly grow and much less ripen till the stock is in the earth, or whether she be a bird of prey, and is lured among the rest to pursue after the scent of a carcass, or whether she conceives her trumpet sounds best and farthest when she stands on a tomb, by the advantage of a rising ground and the echo of a hollow vault'.

Nowhere does the habit of mind and expression illustrated here come nearer, in Swift, to producing an effect in which the satisfaction of the creative impulse plainly predominates. Very often the negative and destructive functions of the play of images and analogies are much more insistent: the strangeness—'the most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together'—is intensely malevolent, and the surprise is brutally shocking. How essentially negative, in this sense, the passage just quoted is comes out when we set it by any of Pope's in which his kindred habit asserts itself. Take this, for instance:

> And now had Fame's posterior Trumpet blown,
> And all the Nations summon'd to the Throne.
> The young, the old, who feel her inward sway,
> One instinct seizes, and transports away.

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[1] *cf.* Leslie Stephen (Pope, p. 132): 'There are some passages marked by Pope's usual dexterity, but the whole is awkwardly constructed, and has no very intelligible connexion with the first part. It was highly admired at the time, and, amongst others, by Gray. He specially praises a passage which has often been quoted as representing Pope's highest achievement in his art. At the conclusion the goddess Dulness yawns, and a blight falls upon art, science and philosophy. I quote the lines, which Pope himself could not repeat without emotion, and which have received the highest eulogies from Johnson and Thackeray.

None need a guide, by sure Attraction led,
And strong impulsive gravity of Head:
None want a place, for all their Centre found,
Hung to the Goddess, and coher'd around.
Not closer, orb in orb, conglob'd are seen
The buzzing Bees about their dusky Queen.

The formal attitude here is one of satiric antipathy, but plainly the positive satisfaction taken by the poet in creating this marvellously organized complexity of surprising tropes, felicitously odd images, and profoundly imaginative puns determines the predominant feeling, which, in fact, might fairly be called genial. So again here, in a simpler instance (the first that presents itself at a turn of the page):

'Ah, think not, Mistress! more true Dulness lies
In Folly's Cap, than Wisdom's grave disguise.
Like buoys, that never sink into the flood,
On Learning's surface we but lie and nod.
Thine is the genuine head of many a house,
And much Divinity without a *Nous*.
Nor could a BARROW work on ev'ry block,
Nor has one ATTERBURY spoil'd the flock.
See! still thy own, the heavy Canon roll,
And Metaphysic smokes involve the Pole'.

And, in general, the same predominance of creativeness, delighting in the rich strangeness of what it contemplates, is to be found whenever Pope devotes himself to 'expressing' or 'ridiculing' (as we are expected to say, considering him as a satirist) the varied absurdities of the human scene.

A Nest, a Toad, a Fungus, or a Flow'r

—here we have, typified in brief, the kind of effect he so obviously loves; and the line serves as a reminder that 'human scene' is too limiting in suggestion.

The common Soul, of Heav'n's more frugal make,
Serves but to keep fools pert, and knaves awake:
A drowsy Watchman, that just gives a knock,
And breaks our rest, to tell us what's a clock.
Yet by some object ev'ry brain is stirr'd;
The dull may waken to a Humming-bird;
The most recluse, discreetly open'd, find
Congenial mattter in the Cockle-kind;
The mind, in Metaphysics at a loss,
May wander in a wilderness of Moss;
The head that turns at super-lunar things,
Poiz'd with a tail, may steer on Wilkins' wings.

—Pope's interest in the objects of absorbing contemplation he ascribes to the 'virtuosi' he is satirizing mayn't be precisely theirs, but it is unmistakably a positive interest. What fascinates him

are effects of fantastic incongruity; effects that at the same time seem to evoke a more exciting reality than that of commonsense. And in creating these effects he is undoubtedly registering certain insistent qualities of experience as it came, good Augustan though he was, to him.

The relation between his interest in these qualities and his concern for Augustan order constitutes one of the most striking aspects of his genius. There is no hostility between them; they associate together harmoniously in a perfect creative alliance. What we find in the part, in the relation between vivid nightmare absurdity and the decorous Augustanism of the verse, we find in large in the totality of the poem. Worked pregnantly in between the Augustan sublimities of the opening and the close, we have, not an ordered development of a corresponding theme, argument or action, but a packed heterogeneity that corresponds in the large to

> A Nest, a Toad, a Fungus or a Flow'r.

Into this can go with perfectly congruous incongruity a satirically straightforward piece of Augustan 'Sense':

> Then thus. 'Since Man from beast by Words is known,
> Words are Man's province, Words we teach alone.
> When Reason doubtful, like the Samian letter,
> Points him two ways, the narrower is the better.
> Plac'd at the door of Learning, youth to guide,
> We never suffer it to stand too wide.
> To ask, to guess, to know, as they commence,
> As Fancy opens the quick springs of Sense,
> We ply the Memory, we load the brain,
> Bind rebel Wit, and double chain on chain,
> Confine the thought, to exercise the breath;
> And keep them in the pale of Words till death.
> Whate'er the talents, or howe'er designed,
> We hang one jingling padlock on the mind.

Such a passage comes in so naturally and easily because of the pervasive rationality of the Augustan versification and idiom. And that Pope can use these as he does in evoking his fantastic incongruities shows that there is nothing repressive about the Order that commands his imagination. His sense of wonder has been richly and happily nourished, and can invest what offers itself as satiric fantasy with the enchantment of fairy-tale:

> Wide, and more wide, it spread o'er all the realm;
> Ev'n Palinurus nodded at the Helm . . .

His ability to unite Augustan with seventeenth-century Wit has profound concomitants.

F. R. LEAVIS.

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